By CAMEL and CAR to the PEACOCK THRONE

E. Alexander Powell

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Major Powell on the upper Euphrates.

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by

E. ALEXANDER POWELL

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To
My Friends and Fellow-Adventurers
HARVEY S. LADEW
of Brook Farm, Brookville, Long Island
and
DeWITT VERMILYE HUTCHINGS
of The Mission Inn, Riverside, California

In memory of days on Mesopotamian wastes and Persian uplands, of nights in Kurdish caravanserais and beside Arab camp-fires: and in appreciation of their unfailing cheerfulness and kindness.

261383

AN ACKNOWLEDGMENT

For the kindness they showed us and the assistance they rendered us during our travels in Nearer Asia, I am indebted to so many persons that, in thanking them, I scarcely know where to begin. His Excellency M. Jules J. Jusserand, French ambassador to the United States, of whom I have long had the honor to be a friend, provided me with invaluable letters of introduction to the French officials in Syria, as he has invariably done when I have visited other portions of France's oversea domain. These letters were supplemented by others from Vicomte Charles de Çhambrun, who, when we started on our journey, was counselor of the French embassy at Constantinople. In General Gouraud, the French high commissioner and commander-in-chief in Syria, I found a friend of war-time days, who not only entertained us delightfully, but placed at our disposal every facility for travel and observation in the mandated territory, as did the vice high commissioner, Vicomte de Caix de St. Aymour, and Colonel Catroux, military governor of Damascus.

Sir Wyndham Deedes, the British acting high commissioner in Palestine, was hospitality and courtesy personified, while our journey across the desert to Baghdad would not have been possible had it not been for the assistance of his Britannic

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AN ACKNOWLEDGMENT

In the preparation of this volume I have consulted many books, some of them written by men who have forgotten more about the lands through which we journeyed than I shall ever know. From that fascinating work, "Life in the Moslem East," by Pierre Pontafidine, late of the imperial Russian consular service, I have drawn liberally in writing my account of the life and customs of the Bedouins. To the Very Rev. Sir George Adam Smith, author of "Syria and the Holy Land," I am indebted for an enormous amount of historical and ethnographic data regarding those regions, and I am under a like obligation to J. T. Parfit, Esq., author of "Marvellous Mesopotamia," a remarkable compendium of information relative to the valleys of the Tigris and the Euphrates. I also welcome this opportunity to acknowledge my indebtedness to "The Riddle of Nearer Asia," by Basil Mathews, Esq.; "Across Persia," by E. Crawshay Williams, Esq.; "Persia, the Awakening East," by W. P. Cresson, Esq.; "Persian Miniatures," by H. G. Dwight, Esq.; "The Gate of Asia," by William Warfield, Esq.; "The Home of Fadeless Splendour," by George N. Whittingham, Esq., and the "Report on India and Persia" made by Dr. Robert E. Speer to the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions. The information and suggestions which I have obtained from these books have added immensely to the value of my own, and those who wish to be really well informed on the history, resources, politics, and problems of the Middle East should not fail to read them. And I would particularly thank Wickham Steed, Esq., Editor of the London "Times," for his kindness in placing at my disposal the remarkable despatches of "The Times's" special correspondents in Palestine, Mesopotamia, and Persia, from which portions of my account of recent political events in those countries have been drawn.

This acknowledgment would not be complete without special mention of my traveling companions, Harvey S. Ladew, Esq., in whose car I motored from Paris to Constantinople; De Witt V. Hutchings, Esq., and Wilfrid Sherin. No one could ask for better companions or stancher friends.

E. Alexander Powell.

"El Dorado"
Coconut Grove
Florida

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CHAPTER I

IN THE CHARIOT-RUTS OF HISTORY

WHEN I told the British chief of staff in Constantinople that we purposed crossing western Asia, from the Mediterranean to the Caspian, through Syria, Arabia, Mesopotamia, and Persia, he was not encouraging.

‘‘Of course you *may* get across all right,’’ he said pessimistically, ‘‘but we can’t guarantee your safety. All we can promise is that, if the Bedouins do capture you, we’ll send out some planes and jolly well bomb the beggars until they let you go.’’

That was his way of dissuading, without actually forbidding us, but it had precisely the opposite effect to that intended, for to us there was something distinctly romantic and attractive in the prospect of being carried off by desert raiders and of being rescued by British bombing-planes, like the hero and heroine in "The Green Goddess." In my mind's eye I could see the gray planes come booming down the sky, the chrysanthemums of smoke and flame as the bombs burst over the black tents, the wild rush to the camels, and ourselves abandoned by our captors in the desert. I could even see the planes land and their commander, a slender, sun-bronzed youth in khaki and leather flying-helmet, scramble from his cockpit and approach us. Being an Englishman, he would probably click his heels together and salute stiffly and say, "Major Powell's party, I presume?" whereupon we would conceal our relief under a mask of indifference and apologize for not being able to offer him a whisky and soda.

"If you are trying to discourage us," I told the chief of staff, "that is the wrong way to go about it. Adventure is what we are looking for. Danger is an old friend. If we had heeded all the warnings we have received, we should never have gotten beyond Paris. Besides," I added, "I have found that one rarely catches up with trouble. It is always in the next county."

"Well," said he, "I don't blame you. It 's a jolly sporting proposition, and hanged if I don't wish I were going along, too."

He came to the door of G.H.Q. to see us off.

"I 'll wire to Baghdad and Amman to instruct our outposts to be on the lookout for you," he told us. "If you do get into trouble, we 'll do our best to get you out of it. Good-by and good luck!"

Thus it came about that the following afternoon saw us leaning on the rail of the *Lamartine* as she steamed majestically down the Golden Horn, swung around Seraglio Point, and headed out across the placid waters of the Marmora Sea. We were off for Syria and the desert.

There were four of us, counting Ladew's servant Sherin. There was Harvey Ladew, who spends his winters riding to hounds with the Meadowbrook or the Pytchley and his summers salmon-fishing in Canada or shooting sheep in Alaska, and who is one of the keenest sportsmen I have ever known. The third was DeWitt Hutchings, who is vice-president of the famous Mission Inn at Riverside, in southern California, and who, in his time, was the greatest third baseman that ever wore on his jersey the orange P of Princeton. Sherin was a young Irishman from the Isle of Wight, who had been in the service of the Duke of Portland until the World War caused him to discard the ducal livery for the king's uniform. He had a joke or a pun for every occasion, he never lost his temper, and he was equally handy with a pressing-iron, a frying-pan, or a gun.

In General Gouraud, the French high commissioner and commander-in-chief in Syria, I found an old acquaintance, for during the World War I had been his guest at headquarters, when he was commanding the French armies in Champagne. With the beard of a *poilu* and the eyes of a poet, his empty right sleeve—for he lost his arm at Gallipoli—pinned across his chest, his fine, soldierly bearing, and the breast of his white uniform ablaze with stars and crosses, he is one of the most picturesque figures in all the armies of France. For his official residence he had taken a building in the Moorish style, originally erected as a gambling casino, which stands in the outskirts of Beirut on the edge of a plantation of pines. In front of the residency is a steeplechase course, where the officers of the garrison hold frequent race-meets, and to the northward, beyond the sea of orange and olive-trees, rise the snowy peaks of the Lebanon, from whose splendid groves of cedar Solomon obtained the timber for the building of the Temple.

The day after our arrival at Beirut General Gouraud gave a dinner at the residency in our honor. I have been a guest at many official dinners, in many lands, but I can recall none with so picturesque and colorful a setting. The large, high-ceilinged rooms of the residency, the windows of colored glass, the beautifully carved *mushrabieh* woodwork, the rare Turkish carpets, the profusion of Damascus brassware, the silent-footed servants in their gold-embroidered jackets, voluminous trousers, and red tarbooshes, made me feel that I had strayed upon a stage set for a play and that shortly the stage-manager would eject me and to it all put an end.

At the long table sat the courtly American consul, Mr. Knabenshue, and his wife; the vice high commissioner, Vicomte de Caix, whose mother was an American and who speaks the English of Fifth Avenue; the acting president of the American University, Dr. Nicolay; a famous French artist, who had come out to Syria at the invitation of the Government to paint pictures of the latest addition to France's colonial empire; staff officers in beautiful sky-blue uniforms, women whose white shoulders gleamed with many jewels, and men whose black coats blazed with many decorations. Toward the close of the dinner the general rose in his place and toasted the United States, and Consul Knabenshue responded by toasting France, and then we all strolled out on the terrace for coffee and cigarettes. From behind a screen of palms came the seductive strains of a native orchestra; the soft night air was heavy with the fragrance of flowers; in the distance the green flanks of the Lebanon swept skyward like a mighty wall. And, in curious contrast to the luxury and gaiety of it all, a crescent moon shone down on the field-guns posted at the gate and on the bayonets of the Senegalese sentries.

Even her most enthusiastic champions can hardly assert that France's administration of the Syrian mandate has been an unqualified success. The casual visitor cannot remain in Syria for a week without realizing that the natives are dissatisfied with French methods of government and are eager to see an end to French rule. For, though French rule is, in the main, just, it is far firmer than was ever that of the Turks, who, when all is said and done, always gave the Syrians a considerable measure of autonomy. And think not that there exists in Syria the universal and deep-seated hatred of the Turk which allied war-time propaganda led the world to suppose, for approximately three quarters of the population of Syria are Moslems, and, therefore, coreligionists of the Turks, and in the East the bonds of religion are very strong.

In considering the Syrian question it should be borne in mind that a very large proportion of the people of Syria confidently expected that, as a result of the allied victory, and by virtue of the promises made by the Allies, they would be given absolute independence, whereas they found, to their astonishment and disappointment, that the statesmen who at Versailles were shaping the destinies of peoples with whom they had had no personal contact and of lands which they had never seen, had no such idea in mind. The report of the King-Crane Commission on Mandates shows that, of the petitions received by the commission, 73.5 per cent asked for the absolute independence of Syria, though this term was seldom used in the sense of an entire freedom from any foreign guidance. But the Supreme Council had decided that the Syrians had not yet reached a stage of development where they could be intrusted with complete independence and that they must be placed under the tutelage of more advanced nations until such time as they were able to stand alone. Small wonder that the Syrians, a peaceable and progressive people, having a glorious historical background, bitterly resented being thus bracketed with the natives of the former German colonies in East Africa, Southwest Africa, the Cameroons, and Polynesia, while the Allies, almost in the same breath, had recognized the complete independence of the Hedjaz, that strip of worthless desert with its population of half-savage tribesmen. But, when the Syrians found that a mandatory form of government was to be thrust upon them, they made it amply clear that they preferred American guidance to either British or French, as is made amply clear by the following extracts from the long-suppressed King-Crane report:

> Our survey left no room for doubt of the choice of the majority of the Syrian people. Although it was not known whether America would take a mandate at all; and although the Commission could not only give no assurances upon that point, but had rather to discourage expectation; nevertheless, upon the face of the returns, America was the first choice of 1,152 of the petitions presented—more than 60 per cent—while no other Power had as much as 15 per cent for first choice. . . .
>
> If for any reason the mandate for Syria is not given to America, then the Commissioners recommend, in harmony with the express request of the majority of the Syrian people, that the mandate be given to Great Britain. The tables show that there are 1,073 petitions in all Syria for Great Britain as Mandatory, if America did not take the mandate. This is very greatly in excess of any similar expression for the French. . . .
>
> On the contrary—for whatever reason—more than 60 per cent of all the petitions, presented to the Commission, directly and strongly protested against any French Mandate. Without going into a discussion of the reasons for this situation, the Commissioners are reluctantly compelled to believe that this situation itself makes it impossible to recommend a single French mandate for all Syria.

But when America refused to accept any responsibilities in the Near East, the Supreme Council, disregarding the report of the commission, and cynically repudiating its own solemnly announced resolution that "the wishes of these communities must be a principal consideration in the selection of the mandatory power," gave the mandate for Syria (exclusive of Palestine) to France.

Now, it should be clearly understood that France did not want to govern Syria under a mandate. The mandate was President Wilson's idea, and France agreed to it because she could not afford to antagonize him. What she *wanted* to do, and doubtless would have done if left to her own devices, was to annex the country outright, just as Great Britain *wanted* to annex Mesopotamia and its oil-wells. But neither France nor England could insist on annexation without tacitly admitting that they were out for the spoils, and thereby alienating American sympathy and risking the loss of further American aid. So the French accepted the mandate, feeling that half a loaf was better than none, but they found, to their intense chagrin, that, instead of being welcomed by the Syrians as liberators and benefactors, they were regarded as intruders who were not wanted at all.

Let us examine for a moment the "rights" on which the French base their claim to Syria. To put it briefly, Roman Catholic missionaries, using principally the French language, have been laboring for several centuries in Syria, where they have developed an extensive system of churches, schools, and monasteries. France has had commercial relations with Syria and small groups of citizens residing in the country since the Middle Ages. France has taken a special interest in the Maronites, and intervened in their behalf in 1860, when she invaded Syria and captured Damascus. French has long been the principal Western language used in Syria. None of these relationships, however, as Messrs. King and Crane point out, give the least "right" to claim territory or mandatory control. Otherwise, it could be held that America, through her missionary and business interests, had acquired a measure of political rights in India, China, Persia, Africa, South America, and Syria itself. France herself could claim all of Turkey with nearly the same justification. If the doctrine was accepted that missionary and commercial relationships with a country constituted a ground on which to base territorial claims, all the missionary work in the world would be compromised.

France made her cardinal mistake in Syria when she filled many of the civil posts in the new government with French officials brought from the colonies in Africa. Though these were honest and competent men, they had learned their trade in the Dark Continent, and they proceeded to treat the proud, sensitive, high-spirited Syrians as they had been accustomed to treat the negroes of Senegal and the Congo. They used the iron hand where they should have used the velvet glove. Under the countless new laws and numerous irritating regulations introduced by the new régime, the Syrians quickly became sullen and resentful. To make matters worse, the French, in selecting natives to fill certain important posts, made several extremely bad appointments, notably in Damascus, where they appointed as governor and as chief of police respectively two Syrians who had been dismissed from the Turkish service for incompetency and corruption.

The visit to Damascus, in the spring of 1922, of Mr. Charles R. Crane, who had been there three years before as a member of the Commission on Mandates, when he had strongly urged the American government to accept the mandate for Syria, and, indeed, for the whole of the Ottoman Empire, provided the discontented Damascenes with a pretext for a demonstration against the governor and the equally detested chief of police, both of whom, remember, were Syrians. This demonstration was interpreted by the French as a threat against themselves and was suppressed by the military authorities with quite unnecessary harshness, wholesale arrests being made while the populace was overawed by cavalry, tanks, and machine-guns. The leaders of the demonstration, all men of high standing, were tried by a French military tribunal, eight of them being sentenced to long terms of penal servitude. Dr. Abdulrahman Shabander, a graduate of the American University at Beirut and one of the leading physicians in Syria, and M. A. Afifi, an Egyptian, were sentenced to twenty years each at hard labor; the others were given terms ranging from five to fifteen years. A high-handed and ill-advised procedure, it would seem, and one of doubtful legality, for Syria, remember, is not a French possession. The severity of the sentences aroused such widespread indignation that it looked for a time as though the Syrians would rise in revolt, in which event the equally discontented Arabs of the hinterland would almost certainly have joined them, but, fortunately for every one concerned, wiser counsels prevailed. An irreparable blunder had been committed, however, and from the Hauran to Aleppo the French found that their well meant efforts to give the country a decent administration were received with hostility and suspicion. The fashion in which the French military court handled the Damascus episode was, to use the words of Talleyrand, worse than a crime; it was a mistake.

But the French, who have, after all, a real genius for governing Oriental races, have recognized their mistakes and profited by them, having during the last year instituted many administrative reforms, including the virtual substitution of a civil for the military government. The initial step toward the formation of a federative state, consisting of the governments of Aleppo, Damascus, and the Great Lebanon, and the Territory of the Alaouite, was taken in July, 1922, when the first parliament of a united Syria was opened amid great pomp at Aleppo. Material progress under the French has been comparatively rapid; roads have been built, trees planted, streets widened, modern sanitary systems instituted, harbor facilities improved, an efficient constabulary organized, and agriculture encouraged. The only reason that more has not been accomplished is because of the financial difficulties under which France herself is laboring. The French officials with whom I talked, from General Gouraud down, impressed me as being broad-minded, earnest, conscientious men, who fully realize the responsibilities that their country has assumed in accepting the mandate for Syria and who are doing their utmost to teach the Syrians how "to stand upon their feet and play the game." The vice high commissioner, Vicomte de Caix, told me that he was constantly impressing upon his subordinates that France was in Syria as a tutor, and that, as soon as the Syrians attained their political majority and no longer required her tutelage, she intended to depart. But—and I say this in no criticism of the French—I do not believe that the mandatory form of government will prove successful. It was, in its inception, partly a political expedient, partly an experiment in idealism, which the French dislike because it limits their authority and which the Syrians resent because it impairs their sovereignty and wounds their pride. The French have discovered in Syria, just as the British have discovered in Egypt and Palestine and Mesopotamia, that the day has gone by when any people will be content to let any other people play the part of an earthly Providence to them. It was a British statesman—Campbell-Bannerman, if I remember rightly—who summed it all up when he said that most peoples prefer to be self-governed rather than well governed.

I am inclined to believe that the most powerful factor in the upbuilding of the Syrian Federation, through inculcating the Syrians with high ideals of government and citizenship, is an American institution, the American University at Beirut, whose attractive buildings of pale brown stone, framed in the foliage of sycamores and palms, stand on the promontory of Ras Beirut, in the western outskirts of the city. The American University is a memorial to the vision, courage, and administrative genius of the Bliss family, for it was founded upward of half a century ago by Dr. Daniel Bliss, was greatly enlarged by his son, Dr. Howard Bliss, and the work is now being carried on by the latter's son-in-law, Mr. Bayard Dodge, who, in 1922, was elected president. Graduates of this remarkable institution, which includes, in addition to the usual academic departments, colleges of medicine, dentistry, and pharmacy, a school of commerce, and a large hospital group, are to-day occupying positions of responsibility all the way from the edges of the Sahara to the borders of India. From Mesopotamia King Feisal has sent six students to be trained at the university for future high positions in his Government, his opinion of the value of its training being shown when he remarked to me, when I was in Baghdad, "What would n't I give if my father had had me educated at the American University at Beirut instead of sending me to Constantinople!" The Government of the Sudan is asking for more trained men than the university can supply, but the highest compliment to the institution was paid by Ibn Sa'ud, the most powerful ruler in Arabia and the spiritual head of the Wahhabis, who are the Puritans of Islam, when he recently applied for the admission of six of his young men for governmental training. Of the thousand students now enrolled, more than half are Moslems, who have always been attracted to the university by its broad religious views, its aloofness from politics, and its refusal to engage in proselytism. The extraordinary influence exerted by the university throughout the Middle East, and the high esteem in which it is held by Christian, Moslem, and Jew alike, are due to the policy of religious tolerance to which it has steadfastly adhered, and which was expressed by Dr. Howard Bliss when he remarked to me nearly twenty years ago, "Let me have the training of the minds and bodies of these young men and their souls will take care of themselves."

In ante-bellum days one had the choice of two routes in traveling from Syria to Palestine. If you were not pressed for time, and were content to endure the discomforts of execrable roads, you could drive by carriage from Beirut to Jerusalem, the journey usually occupying about a week. Or you could take passage by steamer from

Beirut to Jaffa, continuing thence to Jerusalem by a tin-pot Turkish railway. The objection to this latter route was that, particularly during the winter months, when rough weather generally prevails in the eastern Mediterranean, it was frequently impossible for the steamers to land their passengers at Jaffa, which has only an open roadstead, and they were perforce carried on to Port Said. It was a very common thing, indeed, for those who wished to go to Egypt, and who knew the ropes, to purchase their tickets only as far as Jaffa, knowing that, if a heavy sea was running, they could not be disembarked there and would be taken on to an Egyptian port at the company's expense. But to-day, as a result of the excellent roads which have been constructed by the French in Syria and by the British in Palestine, the sea route is comparatively little used, for, by getting an early start, you can travel from Beirut to Jerusalem by motor-car quite comfortably in a single day. Not that I should advise any one's allowing so brief a time for so fascinating and historic a journey, like those American tourists who boast of having "done" the Louvre in an hour.

Syria, using the term in the larger sense, chiefly because she includes Phœnicia and Palestine, has been, as Sir George Adam Smith points out, of greater significance to mankind, spiritually and materially, than any other single country in the world. The home of two of the religions which have spread round the world, and close neighbor to that of the third, Syria holds sites sacred to them all, and is still the resort of their pilgrims from nearly every nation under the sun. To the farthest Christian the land is almost as familiar as his own; his Bible is her geography from Beersheba to Antioch, and her history from Abraham to Paul. Nowhere else has so much history run into or through so narrow a space. The storm-center of the ancient East, the debatable ground between its rival empires on the Nile and the Tigris, and between their Greek successors, the Ptolemies and the Seleucids, Syria was for three thousand years the field upon which their civilizations clashed and mingled. The military history of Syria may be pictured as a procession of nearly all the world's conquerors—Thotmes, Tiglath-Pileser, Sargon, Sennacherib and Nebuchadnezzar, Cambyses and Alexander, Pompey, Cæsar, Augustus, Titus and Hadrian, Omar and Saladin, Tamerlane, Napoleon. Nor do religion and war exhaust her importance to the world. Syria bred the people who first brought the fruits of Eastern civilization to Europe, taught the nations the value of sea-power, and set them an example in maritime commerce and colonization. Phœnicia gave Europe the alphabet and some of the finer handicrafts, contributed to the food of its peoples, or furnished them with luxuries, or infected them with her own superstitions and vices. Long before the Christian era the purple sails of Phœnicia had passed the straits of Gibraltar, had skirted the Red Sea shore, and Africa's eastern seaboard. Arab and European writers alike have praised not only the extraordinary fertility of Syria, but her corn, flax, and wool, her oil, wine, and figs, all indigenous, and her adopted rice, maize, sugar, cotton, indigo, oranges, and lemons. From Syrian harbors the merchantmen of Genoa, Pisa, and Venice carried cargoes not only to Italy and Spain, but after the Crusades to the coasts of the Low Countries, thus laying the foundations for the prosperity of Antwerp, Bruges, and other towns of northern Europe. It is no exaggeration, indeed, to say that the land is as deserving of the name "Mediterranean" as that sea on which her harbors open, and whose waves she was the first to rule.[1] As a portion of the bridge-land uniting Europe, Asia, and Africa—where, in a peculiar degree, the East and the West meet—

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[1] See "Syria and the Holy Land," by the Very Rev. Sir George Adam Smith.

Syria to-day occupies a place of exceptional strategic importance, not only politically and commercially, but from the point of view of world civilization.

We employed for the journey down to Jerusalem a young New Zealander, a former aviator, who had come to the Holy Land with the Anzacs and, recognizing the commercial opportunities which the country offered, had remained on after the war. He now operates a regular motor service between Beirut, Haifa, and Jerusalem, his enterprise having been so well rewarded that, when we were there, he had just added to his equipment half a dozen American-made steam cars. The incongruity and yet the romance of it! As we packed ourselves and our baggage into the car before the Hotel Bassoul in Beirut, I felt that our driver should sing out: *"All aboard for Sidon, Tyre, Acre, Mount Carmel, Cæsarea, Nablus, Nazareth, Jerusalem, and other points in the Promised Land!"* We were indeed motoring in the chariot-ruts of History.

"I was nearly killed right here a few trips back," our driver remarked nonchalantly, as we entered the cleft of the Nahr el-Kasimiyeh, below Sidon. "Some Arabs ambushed me and put seventeen bullets in the car and two or three through my hat. But there is n't much danger now," he added reassuringly, as I drew my automatic around where I could get at it more handily. "Sometimes I make three or four trips running with nothing happening. Why, if things keep on as they 're going, life here will be so tame pretty soon that it won't be interesting!"

As a matter of fact, the only hint of excitement came as we were laboring up the series of steep zigzags, cut in the face of a cliff which rises sheer from the sea, known as the Ladder of Tyre. We had halted at the summit to cool the engine when there suddenly emerged from the ultramarine depths a hundred yards below a round, black, whiskered head of incredible ugliness, set on a sleek, black, tapering body, fully a dozen feet in length, resembling that of an enormous seal. The features of the creature were the more repulsive because they vaguely suggested something human, like the face of a man long drowned. I hazarded the guess that it was a sea-lion, though I had never heard of one in Levantine waters; Hutchings opined that it was some species of manatee; while Ladew, who probably came the nearest to being right, insisted that it was a dugong, that curious aquatic mammal from which arose the mermaid myth, that had wandered northward, through the Red Sea and the Suez Canal, from its home on the beaches of Socotra. In any event, it was a peculiarly fitting spot to come upon this monster of the deep, for we were on the coast of Phœnicia, where so many of our myths began.

The ancient Phœnicia extended from the Nosairiyeh Mountains in northern Syria to Jaffa. It was a narrow but fertile strip of land, with some ports suitable for small vessels, promontories, and islands such as the Phœnicians were fond of colonizing. Though they taught the nations of the West the art of ship-building, though they gave us that Semitic alphabet which is the mother of our own, though they transmitted a knowledge of mathematics, weights and measures to other peoples, there is little to suggest Phœnicia's former greatness in the small and squalid villages which stand on the sites of Sidon and Tyre. Sidon stands, like most of the Phœnician towns, on a promontory, in front of which lies an island. The town, which now has a population of about eleven thousand, contains little of interest, but a half-hour's walk to the southeast brings one to the necropolis of ancient Sidon, in whose grotto-tombs may still be seen the sarcophagi, of marble, of clay, and of lead, which contain the remains of the Sidonian kings. Here was discovered, in 1887, that exquisitely decorated sarcophagus of Alexander, so called, familiar to every one who has visited the Imperial Museum in Constantinople.

The chief beauty of Sidon is in its orchards and gardens, in which are grown oranges, lemons, almonds, apricots, bananas, and palms. In the Homeric poems Sidon is spoken of as rich in ore, but the modern town's chief source of wealth is in its oranges, which are famous throughout the East for their size and flavor. Twenty-odd miles south of Sidon, likewise on a promontory fringed with islands, stands a wretched mud-walled village, Sur, which is all that remains of Tyre, once a city whose name was a synonym for power and riches. Here Astarte is said to have been born; here Hiram reigned; without the city walls lay in turn the besieging armies of Nebuchadnezzar, of Alexander, of Antigonus, and the Crusaders. Here was produced from the murex shell that "Tyrian purple" which was used to dye the products of the Sidonian looms.

A few miles south of Tyre, at the summit of a steep hill which commands a superb view of the sea, our driver stopped the car abruptly in obedience to a peremptory challenge from a soldier in an unfamiliar uniform. It was the southern boundary of Syria; we were at the gates of Palestine. No one can enter the Holy Land without emotion, but I must confess that our emotions received a rude shock when we were curtly commanded to leave the car and enter a small whitewashed barrack beside the road, where a sullen-looking young Jew in British khaki cross-examined us for half an hour in German! At length, after interrogating us minutely as to our antecedents and the object of our visit, and warning us that, under penalty of a fine, we must report ourselves to the health authorities immediately upon our arrival in Jerusalem, he permitted us to proceed. But the romance, the eager anticipation, was gone.

Shortly after leaving the frontier the excellent road which we had been following ran out in deep white sand, which the ingenious British engineers had made passable for cars, however, by covering it with tightly stretched wire netting, like that used around a chicken-yard. But eventually we debouched upon the broad white margin of the U-shaped Bay of Acre which separates Acre, famous as the base of the Crusaders under Richard Cœur de Lion, from Haifa, the bustling modern port which is the rail-head of a line connecting, beyond Jordan, with the Hedjaz Railway. Haifa has supplanted Jaffa as the chief port of Palestine, and in the busy city, with its noisy railway-yards, its warehouses, its streets swarming with British soldiers and native workmen, I hardly recognized the sleepy little seaport which I had last visited fifteen years before. The British have a scheme for building a railway and pipe-line straight across the desert from Baghdad to Haifa, so that their ships may take on Mesopotamian oil without leaving the Mediterranean. If this scheme materializes, the old town under the shadow of Mount Carmel will attain a commercial importance which it never knew before. Our driver stopped in Haifa at a sort of general merchandise store to replenish his gasolene, and, as the shelves were lined with bottles of a well known brand of English gin (at eighty-five cents a bottle) and with other bottles of French and Italian vermouth, we utilized the delay by mixing a quart or two of cocktails. No shaker being available, we utilized a large tin bucket. And the next morning we awoke with splitting headaches.

We were now in Galilee, a very fertile region, with a profusion of bush and scattered woodlands, proofs of the possibilities of afforestation, some vines, olives, and broad valleys floored with arable soil on which almost anything can be grown. In ancient times "no part lay idle"; the olives were said to be easier to cultivate here than elsewhere in Syria, and the towns and villages were more numerous. Convincing proof of the wealth everywhere possible to industry and scientific agriculture is provided by the German colony under Mount Carmel, whose slopes their labor has converted into vineyards not unlike those on the Neckar and the Rhine. Under good government there should be great wealth in Galilee, in a climate singularly happy.

Dusk was at hand when we left Haifa, and darkness had fallen long before we drew up at the Casa Nova Hospice in Nazareth, where we were to spend the night. This is one of those curious institutions so frequent in Palestine, half monastery and half hotel, where the traveler can obtain a clean bed and simple but wholesome fare and pay what he considers them worth, for bills are never rendered. The appearance of the little town, especially in the spring, when its dazzling white walls are embosomed in a green framework of cactus hedges, fig and olive trees, is very pleasing. Despite the imposing churches, hospices, and schools which have been erected in the outskirts by the Greeks, the Maronites, the Protestants, and the Latins, the native town is perhaps not greatly changed since the boy Jesus walked its narrow, winding streets or worked in the carpenter shop of Joseph. The principal "sights" of Nazareth are this same carpenter shop, or what is alleged to be the shop, a small subterranean chamber or grotto to which access is gained through the crypt of the church that has been erected on the traditional site; the Church of the Annunciation, with a column marking the spot where the Virgin received from the Angel Gabriel the announcement of the incarnation; the Mensa Christi, or Table of Christ, a block of hard chalk, a dozen feet in length, on which Christ is said to have dined with His disciples both before and after the Resurrection; and the Well of the Virgin, a stone-arched spring such as may be found in every Eastern town. The Well of the Virgin is one of the few spots of scriptural interest in the Holy Land which are unquestionably authentic, for it is the only spring which the town possesses. It is all but certain, therefore, that the mother of Christ went there to fill her earthen jar nineteen hundred years ago, just as the chattering damsels of Nazareth do to-day.

Leaving Nazareth late the following morning, we took the long straight road which, dipping down from the Galilean hills, runs like a chalk-mark across the great green plain of Esdraelon. At our left was Mount Tabor; at our right the rugged outline of Mount Carmel rose against the western sky. At Jenin, which is now a great British camp, we lunched at the mess of the army transport corps, whose hospitable officers drew lavishly on their meager store of tinned goods and bottled beer for our entertainment. A few miles beyond lay the cantonment of the Scots Greys, on the same spot, no doubt, where once had been pitched the tents of the Roman legions. After lunch we took the road to Jerusalem, a winding road with an excellent surface but many hair-pin turns, which led us through the hills of Samaria. Most of them were stony—the stony places made so familiar by the parable of the sower; some were ablaze with scarlet anemones, and clumps of cyclamen grew under the overhanging rocks, on the sunny side of which basked countless green-and-yellow lizards. It was rather cold, like a brisk spring day at home, and there was fog in the high hills, but down in the valleys we could see orange groves bright with fruit and miles and miles of almond blossoms. At frequent intervals we passed trim-looking troopers of the newly formed Palestine Gendarmerie in khaki uniforms, their slouch-hats fastened up rakishly in front, Australian fashion. This force is composed, in the main, of former Black and Tans, who were brought out to Palestine when their usefulness in Ireland was ended. They are organized as a very mobile force, a sort of reserve for the native constabulary, detachments of them being stationed throughout the country at strategic points, whence they can be rushed to spots where danger threatens in motor-trucks and on motor-cycles. Arab peasants, astride of diminutive donkeys, sometimes leading behind them strings of heavily laden camels; sun-bronzed nomads in flowing robes from the country beyond the Jordan; ramshackle Fords packed with strange-looking Jews, of the Askenazim sect, all the males, old and young, with greasy side-locks hanging before their ears; British Tommies in shorts and quilted helmets, went by in endless and picturesque procession as we sped toward the Holy City.

CHAPTER II

THE STRUGGLE FOR POWER IN PALESTINE

WE were in the outskirts of Jerusalem before we realized it. We turned a corner in the road, and there before us rose the city, set upon a hill. In its narrow, noisome alleys, its tortuous lanes, its dim bazaars, its four-square houses with their brown mud walls, rising on the hillside, one above another, like chairs in an amphitheater, it resembles many another Oriental city that I know. But above the flat-roofed dwellings rise scores of imposing buildings in brick and stone, churches, convents, monasteries, hospices, mosques, and synagogues, representing the religious devotion of Protestant and Catholic, Latin and Greek, Copt and Armenian, Moslem and Jew. For it must be remembered that to the Jew and the Mohammedan, equally with the Christian, Jerusalem is "the Holy City," for the rock from which rose the great altar in front of the Temple of Israel is for the Mohammedan the spot on

The four *Ferinjees* on the banks of the Jordan. Left to right: Major Powell, Mr. Hutchings, Mr. Ladew, Sherin.

Nazareth. The Well of the Virgin and the car in which we motored down to the Promised Land.

Winding in and out through the teeming, tangled labyrinth of the lower town is a series of dim and vaulted passages.

Jerusalem: the Via Dolorosa, the modern counterpart of the steep and narrow path which led from Pilate's palace to the summit of Calvary.

which his Prophet prayed, and inferior in sanctity only to the Kaaba at Mecca.

There is probably but slight resemblance between the modern city and the Jerusalem known to Christ, for every spot having any conceivable connection, real or fancied, with the Savior, has built upon it a church or a shrine or a monastery, so that it requires a very vivid imagination to picture the place as it must have looked at the time of the Crucifixion. Moreover, none of the authorities agree on the site of the Crucifixion or of the Holy Sepulcher, even Baedeker enumerating no less than three sites which eminent authorities have asserted to be the true Golgotha. Several English authorities, including General Gordon, who visited Jerusalem in 1882, three years before his death at Khartoum, regard the hill immediately above the Grotto of Jeremiah, a short distance to the north of the Damascus Gate, as the true site of Calvary, and believe this niche-tomb to be the grave of Jesus. Conder, on the other hand, places the sepulcher a few hundred yards to the westward, while the late Dr. Howard Bliss held to the belief that the last resting-place of the Savior was on the slopes of the Mount of Olives. Personally, I like to believe that the site set by Gordon is the true one, for the walled garden which surrounds the grotto is very sweet and peaceful, and, in the spring, is fragrant with the scent of many flowers. It is, I think, such a spot as Jesus would have loved.

The first thought of all who go to Jerusalem, of course, is to visit the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, the holy of holies of the Christian world. The church, which is built, according to tradition, on Calvary, one of its chapels marking the reputed site of the cross and another that of the rock tomb where the body of Jesus was laid, stands in the very heart of the city, within a stone's throw of the bazaars, the streets, or rather alleys, which lead to it being too narrow to admit of vehicles, so that all who visit the shrine must do so on foot. This church is of such surpassing interest to all Christians that I will be pardoned, I trust, if I briefly review its checkered history. Christ was crucified in the year 29. Forty-one years later Jerusalem was captured by Titus and utterly destroyed, but was rebuilt in 136 by the Emperor Hadrian, who built on Calvary, which was then without the city walls, a great terrace, on which he erected an altar dedicated to the worship of Astarte. When Constantine was converted to Christianity in 312, his mother, the Empress Helena, directed Bishop Macarius to institute a search for the holy places. On the sites which he indicated she erected two churches, that of the Holy Sepulcher and the Basilica of the Holy Cross. These were destroyed by the Persians in the seventh century but were almost immediately rebuilt, only to be destroyed a few years later, this time by fire. In 1055 another church was erected in their stead, but the Crusaders, deeming this building unworthy of such a site, early in the twelfth century raised a great Romanesque building which embraced all the holy places. This church stood for seven hundred years, but in the great fire of 1808 it was almost completely destroyed. The Greeks succeeded in obtaining from the sultan a *firman* giving them the sole right to restore the building, and they did their worst, as is testified by the hideous structure of to-day, with its clumsy, rather squat façade, sandwiched between utterly incongruous buildings, overlooking a constricted square.

Incredible as it may seem, the doorkeeper of this, the chief Christian church in the world, is a Mohammedan and none may enter until its door has been opened by him, and him alone. It is said that this curious custom originated in remembrance of the magnanimity of the Caliph Omar, who, upon his capture of Jerusalem in 637, spared the city and the lives of its inhabitants and secured the Church of the Holy Sepulcher from damage or occupation. And when General Allenby entered Jerusalem, nearly thirteen centuries later, he reciprocated Omar's chivalry by including in his proclamation a proviso that the hereditary custodians of the church, who had always been Moslems, should continue in that office.

Though the façade of the church is, as I have remarked, by no means imposing, the vast, dim interior, with its immense rotunda, its hundreds of hanging lamps, its marble floors and jeweled shrines, is, despite its clumsy architecture and diverse styles of decoration, undeniably impressive. Nor could it be otherwise, for it is the focal point, the power-house of the Christian faith, and the nerves of the religion which was born upon this spot and has spread around the world still quiver around its stones. Though the priests and pilgrims who throng the church are there for the purpose of worshiping Him who said, "Love one another," the British authorities have found it necessary to post Mohammedan gendarmes about the building, just as the Turks did before them, in order to prevent the representatives of the various Christian sects from fighting among themselves. More than once during recent years bloody riots have taken place in the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, these disorders usually having been the outcome of disputes between the four controlling sects—Greeks, Latins, Copts, and Armenians—over the lighting of the lamps which hang in the holy places. The combination of jealousy and fanaticism of the numerous religious communities in Jerusalem form, indeed, the chief modern characteristics of the Holy City. It is a depressing but undeniable fact that the native Christians of all sects are by no means worthy representatives of their faith; the attitude of many of the resident clergy is marked either by a wild superstition or the merest formalism; the bitter war which rages among them is carried on with very foul weapons; and the contempt with which both Jews and Moslems look down on the Christians is only too well deserved.

In "The Home of Fadeless Splendour," Mr. George N. Whittingham describes one of the scandalous scenes, resulting from the jealousies between the various Christian sects, which he witnessed in the Church of the Holy Sepulcher on the first Easter Sunday after the British occupation of Jerusalem:

> Twice the procession (consisting of Armenians, Copts, and Syrians) perambulated the Rotunda, and then as they began the third tour a Syrian moved a chair which belonged to the Copts. Immediately a hand-to-hand fight broke out in which all the Copts and all the Syrians joined, save only their respective Bishops, who stood on one side and looked on, making no attempt to stem the battle. Women and children

screamed and rushed to take cover in chapels or wherever else they could find shelter. Palms, candles, chairs, and crosses were used as weapons. The men fought and beat each other, were knocked down, and trampled on the ground. The battle waxed fast and furious, the shouting and screaming increased, and the combatants chased each other round the church. . . . All this I saw from my alcove in the Franciscan gallery, and the comments of my Franciscan friends were not without satire! Gradually the tumult subsided, the Armenians returned from their quarter, the Copts and Syrians rearranged their somewhat dishevelled garments, and the procession continued its way for the third and last time, each part of it singing their own particular hymn, in their own language, and to their own tune.

The sepulcher itself is situated in the center of a great rotunda, covered by the so-called Angels' Chapel. Of the fifteen lamps which burn within this chapel five belong to the Greeks, five to the Latins, four to the Armenians, and one to the Copts, it being a curious fact that, though the army which liberated Jerusalem from Turkish rule in 1918 was the army of a Protestant power, the millions of that sect are without representation in Christianity's most sacred shrine. The Chapel of the Angels incloses the smaller Chapel of the Holy Sepulcher, a grotesque and hideous building, erected by the Greeks in 1810 to take the place of a very beautiful chaped destroyed by the fire. The entrance is so low that one has to stoop to enter it. Within, in a tiny chamber apparently cut from the solid rock, is a marble slab about five feet long and two wide, worn smooth and shiny by the kisses of generations of pilgrims. This slab, according to tradition, covers the shelf in the rock on which the body of the Savior was laid after the descent from the cross. From the ceiling, which rests upon marble columns, hang forty-three precious lamps, of which four belong to the Copts, the rest being equally divided among the Greeks, Latins, and Armenians. Though there is grave doubt in the minds of most scientific investigators as to the authenticity of the site, though the decorations of the shrine are oppressively ornate and even garish, though there prevails an atmosphere of factional jealousy, intolerance, and fanaticism, no one can stand in this low-roofed, dimly lit, incense-scented chamber without experiencing deep emotion. Of the four of us, Sherin was the only Roman Catholic, and the only one, perhaps, who was deeply religious, but that did not prevent us from buying candles from the old Greek priest who is the guardian of the shrine and burning them in memory of Him who was the founder of our faith.

The Chapel of Calvary, which marks the traditional site of the Crucifixion, is reached by a double flight of stairs, its pavement being about fourteen feet above the level of the church. To the right is shown the spot where Christ was stripped of His garments; close by is the Latin altar commemorating the nailing to the cross; next is another Latin altar, Stabat Mater, where the Virgin received the body of Christ after it was taken from the cross; and, a little beyond, is the Altar of the Crucifixion, which belongs to the Greeks. Under this altar is a silver disk with an opening in the center, covering the cleft in the rock in which the cross is said to have been inserted. If the sites thus marked are to be accepted as the genuine ones, then the sepulcher of Christ was situated only forty yards from the place where He was crucified.

The subterranean chamber—really a cavern in the rock—known as the Chapel of St. Helena, where, according to tradition, the cross was found, is now in the possession of the Greeks, though it originally belonged to the Abyssinians. The handful of Abyssinian monks—bearded black men in sandals and snowy robes—who represent in Jerusalem the Ethiopian branch of the Christian faith, dwell in a cluster of conical, whitewashed huts on the flat roof of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher itself.

Winding in and out through the teeming, tangled labyrinth of the lower town goes the Via Dolorosa, the modern counterpart of the steep and narrow path which led from the Prætorium, the judgment-hall of Pilate, to the summit of the little hill, originally without the city walls, known as Calvary. Along it, marked to-day by tablets, shrines, and chapels, are the "stations of the cross": the spot where the cross was laid upon Jesus; the Ecce Homo Arch, where Pilate uttered the words, "Behold the man!"; where Christ sank under the weight of the cross; where He is said to have met His mother; where Simon lifted the cross from His shoulders; and where He fell the second time. The tenth, eleventh, twelfth, and thirteenth stations are in the Golgotha chapels of the Church of the Sepulcher, the fourteenth and last station being the Holy Sepulcher itself. It is scarcely within the bounds of probability, however, that the feet of the Savior trod these very stones, as some would have us believe, for the Jerusalem of the Crucifixion, repeatedly destroyed by fires and conquerors, lies far below the level of the modern town.

Though I can quite understand the pious zeal which led Helena and the Crusaders, and those who came after them, to cover these spots so sacred to Christianity with churches, chapels, and shrines, I could not but wish, as I looked at the inappropriate, unattractive, often hideous structures, with their heterogeneous architecture and garish decorations, that another conflagration might consume them all and sweep the whole stage of the Great Drama clean. And perhaps—who knows?—it might at the same time purge the Holy Places of the shameful hatreds, jealousies, and intolerances which are so unworthy of them. Then, under the supervision of archæologists and architects and students, Calvary and its environs might be restored to the appearance that they bore in the time of Christ, with wooded hills, and winding paths and flowers and olive groves. To many, no doubt, this would be a profanation, but it seems to me that, far more appropriate than the most splendid edifice of marble to commemorate the Crucifixion would be a simple cross, standing solitary on a hilltop beneath the Syrian sky.

Incontestably the most beautiful building in Jerusalem, and, indeed, one of the most beautiful in the world, is the Dome of the Rock, commonly though erroneously known as the Mosque of Omar, for it is not in reality a mosque, but a shrine, and it was not built by Omar. The Dome of the Rock is the direct successor of the Temple of Solomon, for it stands over the same rock that was once the floor of the Hebrews' Holy of Holies. According to the Talmud, this rock covers the mouth of an abyss in which the waters of the Flood are heard roaring, and here, if tradition is to be believed, Abraham was on the point of slaying Isaac. There can be little doubt that it was the site of the great altar for burnt-offerings, traces of a channel for carrying off the blood having been discovered in the rock.

Probably no spot of similar size upon this earth has had so many great historical events enacted upon and around it. A thousand years before the Crucifixion Solomon reared upon the mighty boulder his famous Temple, and, bringing out of the city of David the Ark of the Lord, which contained the Tablets of the Law, placed it in the Holy of Holies. Here, for four hundred and seventy years, was focused the religious and political life of God's chosen people, who regarded the Rock as the center of the world. But in 586 B.C. it was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar and the Jews taken captive to Babylon. Seventy years later, when the Israelites returned from captivity, the Temple was rebuilt, but it was so inferior to the structure raised by Solomon that it is said "the people wept on beholding it." When the Christian era was threescore and ten years old, the Romans under Titus captured Jerusalem and the Temple was again destroyed, "not one stone remaining upon another." Nearly six centuries later the Caliph Omar visited the site of the sacred rock and, finding it a dumping-place for the city's refuse, helped to clear it with his own hands and on it built a *mihrab,* or place of prayer. In 686 the Caliph Abd-el-Melik tore down the miserable structure erected by Omar and began the construction of the present Dome of the Rock, to which numerous additions were made by his successors. Then the Crusaders came, and the crescent was replaced by the cross, but the victorious Saladin restored the building again to Moslem worship, and Moslem it has remained ever since, being regarded by the followers of the Prophet as the holiest of all places after Mecca.

An octagonal structure of white marble incrusted with peacock-tinted Persian tiles, admirably proportioned and of surpassing beauty, the Dome of the Rock rises from a low platform which stands in the center of a great walled esplanade known as the Haram es-Sherif, or Noble Sanctuary. The inclosure, which, on its eastern side, falls abruptly away into the stony ravine known as the Valley of Jehoshaphat, beyond which lies the Garden of Gethsemane with its flowers and its ancient cypresses, has, as I have already remarked, been a place of religious sanctity from time beyond reckoning. The Jews never enter it, as they dread the possibility of committing the sin of treading on their Holy of Holies. Here

David erected an altar; here stood both the Temple and the palace of Solomon; here Christ pronounced those wonderful discourses, such as the parable of the Good Shepherd and that of the Widow's Mite; and here He worked some of His chief miracles.

The interior of the mosque, whose walls are incrusted with mosaics in very rich and variegated designs, is unequaled for beauty and splendor in the whole world of Islam. Beneath the great dome, which is supported by two concentric rows of massive marble columns, is the holy rock itself, an enormous boulder, about sixty feet long by forty wide, which rises several feet above the surrounding marble pavement. Connecting the columns of the inner row is a wrought-iron screen, placed there by the Crusaders when they converted the mosque into a Christian church. The Rock itself is surrounded by a colored wooden screen, beautifully decorated. Mohammed declared that one prayer here was more efficacious than a thousand elsewhere. He himself claimed to have prayed here, though of this there are grave doubts, and from here, so the Moslems believe, he was translated to heaven on the back of El Burak, his miraculous steed. Should you be skeptical (and to exhibit skepticism is not wise in such fanatical surroundings, where unbelievers are barely tolerated) the guardian will point out to you in the ceiling the mark of the Prophet's head, and, on the side of the boulder, the impression of the hand of the angel who restrained the Rock in its attempt to follow the Prophet to paradise.

Perhaps the most curious sight, in a city so full of sights that it bewilders the imagination, is the Wailing Place of the Jews. It is a short, narrow, cobble-paved alley at the foot of the wall of cyclopean granite blocks, sixty feet high, which forms the western boundary of the Haram and may be regarded, therefore, as a part of the foundation of Solomon's Temple. Here, especially on Fridays toward nightfall and on Jewish festivals, the more devout of the Jews repair to pray and to bewail the departed glories of Zion.

"*For the palace that lies desolate,*" chants the leader; and, "*We sit in solitude and mourn,*" respond the wailers. "*Haste! Haste! Redeemer of Zion!*" implores the leader, and the mourners answer, "*Speak to the heart of Jerusalem.*"

The men wear long velvet gowns of the most gorgeous colors—orange, peacock-blue, emerald-green, crimson—and round caps trimmed with a band of fur resembling sable. They all have beards, certain of the younger men bearing a somewhat striking resemblance to pictures of the

Savior, but they are rendered rather repulsive by their greasy curls or side-locks. They lean against the wall for hours, pressing their lips against the rock, whispering into its crevices, reading from the Talmud, chanting, praying, groaning. A curious spectacle and not a pleasing one. To my way of thinking, at least, they would be better Jews and better citizens if, instead of spending their days bewailing the vanished glories of Zion, they would join the thousands of industrious, energetic, patriotic Jews who, under the ægis of Great Britain, are engaged in building for the people of their faith a prosperous and well governed home land.

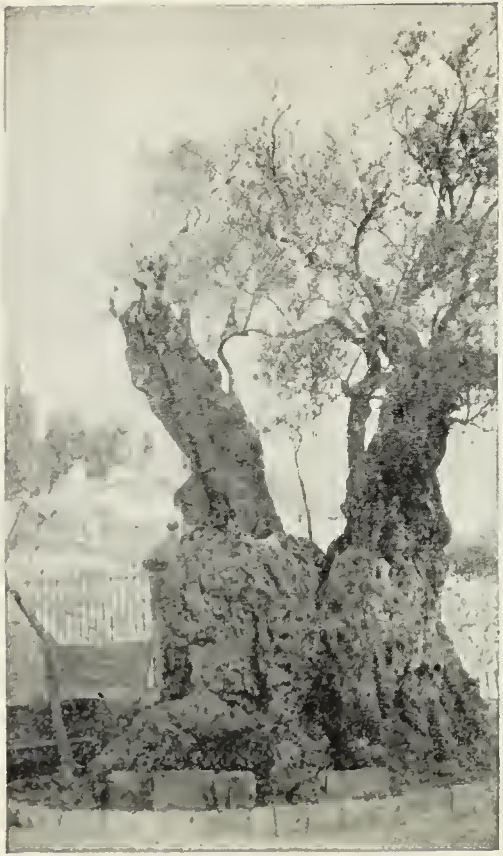
Palestine under British mandate is about nine thousand square miles in extent—the same size and very much the same shape as New Hampshire—and includes only that part of historic Palestine which lies to the west of the Jordan. Most foreigners think of Palestine as populated mainly by Jews, with a sprinkling of Christians and a handful of Moslems. But, as a matter of fact, exactly the opposite is the case. The population of this territory, on July 1, 1921, was approximately 770,000, of whom 600,000 were Mohammedans, 85,000 Christians, and 80,000 Jews. These figures are in themselves sufficient to explain the difficulties which the British administration in Palestine is encountering as a result of the famous Balfour Declaration. Seldom in history has so brief a document been the foundation of so great a world-commotion. It is merely a single sentence of sixty-eight words, addressed by the Right Hon. A. J. Balfour, as he then was, to Lord Rothschild, in these terms:

> His Majesty's Government view with favor the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavors to facilitate the achievement of that object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country.

Now, it should be remembered that this brief but momentous document was issued on November 2, 1917, when the Allies were in desperate straits, when Jerusalem had not yet fallen, and when the World War had still a year to run. That it was dictated by motives of political expediency can scarcely be denied; but, though it may have contributed to weaken the "war-will" of the many Zionist Jews of the Central Empires, its wisdom, in view of later developments, is open to grave question. Is it to be wondered, then, that the Moslems, who outnumber the Jews by more than seven to one, and the native Christians, who

The entrance to the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, the holy of holies of the Christian world, which is built, according to tradition, on the site of Calvary.

The Dome of the Rock, the third holiest place in the Moslem world, stands on the site of Solomon's palace and the Temple.



One of the venerable olive-trees in the Garden of Gethsemane, beneath which Jesus is believed to have sat. Close by is the spot where He was betrayed by Judas.

The guardian of the Tomb of the Virgin, where, according to legend, the mother of Christ was interred by the Apostles. At the back is the Mount of Olives.

also exceed in numbers the Jewish population, became seriously alarmed? They feared, and with justification, that the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine, followed by an influx of Jewish immigrants from Europe and America, would ultimately result in a Jewish majority or at least in a strong and politically dominant minority. And these fears, despite the efforts of the British Government to allay them, have steadily increased, and among both Christians and Moslems the British have grown steadily more unpopular. It may be confidently affirmed that this anti-British feeling and this hostility to the British Government are almost entirely due to the identification of British policy, by the non-Jewish elements, with political and, as they believe, predatory Zionism. In other words, had the British Government supplemented the Balfour Declaration with an explicit avowal that the establishment of a Jewish national home in Palestine did not involve Jewish political domination over the indigenous population, and that no British Government would support such a domination, or would disregard non-Jewish opinion with regard to the methods to be employed in founding that national home, the native Christians and Moslems would not now be so firmly convinced that England is attempting to impose a tenant upon a householder without consulting his wishes, and hoping that the tenant will one day be strong enough to evict him.

The claim of the modern Jew to a national home in Palestine is threefold: by right of the history of his fathers, by right of his own devotion to the ideal of a national life, and by right of his recent successful exertions on the soil. But, in considering the claims of the Jew, we must not forget to do justice to an element of the population which has an even stronger claim to the land than the Jew. I refer to the native peasantry, the *fellahin,* to whom the Zionists erroneously refer as "Arabs." In a land whose history has been so filled with invasion and migration, the peasants, as Sir George Adam Smith has pointed out, are bound to be of diverse stocks; and from district to district they vary in stature, physiognomy, mental force, and culture. In the main they are Semitic, but they have sprung from three distinct families of that race: the ancient Canaanites, who entered Palestine about 2500 B.C.; the Arameans who arrived about the same time as Israel; and Arabs who have drifted and still drift in from the desert, gradually passing from herding to tillage, from tents to houses, from encampments to permanent villages, large and small. But, whatever their varieties, the *fellahin* have these things in common: that they labor, and for centuries have labored, on the soil, and that they are therefore the basis of the people and the state. To assert, then, as the Zionists have done, that "Palestine is the national home of the Jewish people and of no other people," is to defy the facts of history. And what of the Christian communities? Have they not been as long in possession of their portions of the land as ever the Jews were? Is not Palestine the birthplace of their faith also and its fields as sacred to Christians as to Jews? Has Christianity "made no history" and "left no image of its spirit" on the Holy Land?[1] No fair-minded person will deny that the Jews have a right to establish a national home in the land of their fathers, but that does not mean that 80,000 Jews have a right to impose their rule, no matter how just and tolerant that rule might be, on nearly 700,000 Christians and Moslems.

The world should not shut its eyes to the fact that the anti-Zionist feeling in Palestine is intense and not lightly to be discounted. I am convinced —and I believe that my conviction is shared by a majority of the British army officers in Palestine —that the extreme Zionist program of unlimited immigration of Jews, looking finally to making the country distinctly a Jewish state, can only be carried out by force of arms, for it is to be remembered that the non-Jewish population of Palestine—nearly nine tenths of the whole—are emphatically against the entire Zionist program. To subject a people so minded to unlimited Jewish immigration, and to steady financial and social pressure to surrender the land, would not only be a gross violation of the spirit of the mandate, but it would almost certainly precipitate a revolt of the non-Jewish elements of the population. One of the gravest features of the situation, as I see it, is that it may add to the discontent, already so wide-spread, throughout the Moslem world. For the initial claim, often put forward by Zionist spokesmen, that they have a "right" to Palestine, based on an occupation of two thousand years ago, is hardly worthy of serious consideration.

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[1] "Syria and the Holy Land," by the Very Rev. Sir George Adam Smith.

"There is a further consideration," to quote the King-Crane report, "that cannot justly be ignored if the world is to look forward to Palestine becoming definitely a Jewish state, however gradually that may take place. That consideration grows out of the fact that Palestine is 'the Holy Land' for Jews, Christians, and Moslems alike. Millions of Christians and Moslems all over the world are quite as much concerned as the Jews with conditions in Palestine, especially with those conditions which touch upon religious feeling and rights. The relations in these matters in Palestine are most delicate and difficult. With the best possible intentions, it may be doubted whether the Jews could possibly seem to either Christians or Moslems proper guardians of the holy places, or custodians of the Holy Land as a whole. . . .

"The reason is this: The places which are most sacred to Christians—those having to do with Jesus—and which are also sacred to Mohammedans, are not only not sacred to Jews but are abhorrent to them. It is simply impossible, under those circumstances, for Moslems and Christians to feel satisfied to have these places in Jewish hands, or under the custody of Jews. There are still other places about which Moslems must have the same feeling. In fact, from this point of view, the Moslems, just because the sacred places of all three religions are sacred to them, have made very naturally much more satisfactory custodians of the holy places than the Jews could be. It must be believed that the precise meaning, in this respect, of the complete Jewish occupation of Palestine has not been fully sensed by those who urge the extreme Zionist program. For it would intensify, with a certainty like fate, the anti-Jewish feeling both in Palestine and in all other portions of the world which look to Palestine as 'the Holy Land.' "

There are several causes for the anti-Zionist feeling which is prevalent in Palestine. Chief among these have been the provocative utterances and indiscreet actions of the Zionist Commission, which represents in Palestine the World Zionist Organization, and which has been recognized by the British Government as the agency of the Jewish people in all matters pertaining to the upbuilding of the Jewish national home. This commission, in the words of a report made by a board of inquiry, under the chairmanship of Sir Thomas Haycraft, chief justice of Palestine, "has exercised an exacerbating rather than a conciliatory influence on the Arab population of Palestine and has thus been a contributory cause of the disturbances." Dr. Eder, a British Jew and a member of the Zionist Commission, testifying before this board of inquiry, made it clear that he considered there could be but one national home in Palestine, and that a Jewish one; that there must be Jewish predominance as soon as the Jews are strong enough numerically; and that the Jews alone should have the right to bear arms. The leaders of the non-Jewish element have also made much capital out of the imprudences of Zionist writers. Mr. Israel Zangwill, for example, in writing of the problems presented by the existence of a large Arab majority in Palestine, said: "We cannot allow the Arabs to block so valuable a piece of historic reconstruction, so romantic a reparation to the sorely tried race of the Apostles. And therefore we must gently persuade them to 'trek.' " This sort of utterance, as might be expected, has done much to increase the tension between the Zionists and the Arabs. And the fears aroused in the Arabs by these inflammatory utterances have been crystallized by the continual influx of Jews into Palestine. In their desire to increase the numerical strength of the Jews in Palestine as quickly as possible and to do their suffering coreligionists in eastern Europe a good turn, the Zionists have imported relatively large numbers of immigrants from Rumania, Galicia, and the border states which formerly belonged to the Russian Empire—Ukraine, Poland, Lithuania, and the rest—a considerable proportion of whom are tainted with Bolshevism. It should be added, however, that those Bolshevist Jews who have attempted to introduce into Palestine the doctrines of Lenin and Trotzky have not met with much success. The truth of the matter is that the Zionists have been careless in their selection of immigrants, that their labor policy of bringing immigrants into the country before there is land for them has been a hasty and impractical one, and has resulted in enhancing the Arabs' suspicion that the Zionists aim at early political domination of Palestine. It is also regrettable that the Zionist Commission has taken no steps to check either the formation of a secret defense force, or the importation by certain Jews of firearms, which has become known to the Arabs and has naturally increased their suspicion of and hostility toward the Jews. Looking toward the future, it seems to me that the relations between Jew and Moslem are not likely to improve until the moderate elements of Jewry replace the extremists who are at present in control of Zionism's program in Palestine, and until the Zionists make it unmistakably clear that, in working for a national home for the Jews, they are *not* working for ultimate Jewish political control of the Holy Land.[1]

Government House, the seat of the British administration and the official residence of the British high commissioner, Sir Herbert Samuel, is the vast and imposing building formerly known as the Rhine Schloss, which the kaiser built on the slopes of the great down, three miles from Jerusalem, known to all Christendom as the Mount of Olives. This immense structure, half palace and half hospice, is the showiest of the numerous Teutonic advertisements which the Germans erected all over the Holy Land before the war. As the British Government rents it from the Germans, it remains virtually unchanged since pre-war days. Within the vast courtyard may still be seen the great stone statues of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, and beside them, a little larger, a little more imposing, a statue of that apostle of German *Kultur,* William Hohenzollern. We dined at Government House one evening as the guests of Sir Wyndham Deedes, who, in the absence of Sir Herbert Samuel, was the acting high commissioner. At the table I heard spoken about me English, French, Hebrew, Turkish, Arabic, Greek, and Armenian. And I found myself sitting beside the wife of the mayor of Jerusalem, a beautiful Levantine who had been born in Syria, educated in Constantinople, and had spent most of her life in Paris; and a charming Englishwoman who had been born in South America, had married in the South Sea Islands, and had lived in turn in Cyprus, the West Indies, the Malay states, and Palestine. The white shirt-fronts of the men, the white shoulders of the women, the silent-footed servants in their picturesque costumes, the flowers, the music, the lights, the laughter, all combined to form a brilliant and memorable scene. But after dinner, while the coffee and cigarettes were being served in the great drawing-room, I stepped to the window and drew aside the heavy hangings. High in the sky rode a full moon, which cast a silvery radiance over the wooded slopes of the Mount of Olives, the stony ravine which is the Vale of Kidron, and the roofs and spires of the Holy City. And as I looked it seemed to me that I could discern a solitary, white-clad figure, head on breast, lost in meditation, pacing slowly between the ordered rows of olive-trees.

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[1] See "Some Truths About Palestine" in the London "Times," April 3-10, 1922.

CHAPTER III

AN ARABIAN ANABASIS

THERE are two overland routes to Baghdad. One starts at Aleppo, strikes across northern Syria to the Euphrates, follows that historic river in a southeasterly direction to Deir-es-Zor, and thence crosses the Mesopotamian waste to Mosul, which is only seventy-five miles from Sherghat, the present terminus of the southern section of the famous Baghdad Railway. Before the war threw western Asia into turmoil, this was the route followed by those who had the hardihood to undertake the overland journey, the Turkish despatch-riders, on their fleet racing camels, carrying the mails from Aleppo to Baghdad in eleven days. The other route, which starts at Damascus and leads straight across the Hamad, or Syrian Desert, as the airplane flies, though frequently used by caravans, has been traversed by only a handful of Europeans, mainly British officers on surveying expeditions or political missions. In winter, when the weather is reasonably cool and the desert is covered with vegetation of a sort as a result of frequent rains, the caravan road across the Hamad is preferable, perhaps; but when we reached Syria the hot season was already at hand, and, though there would be plenty of water along the Euphrates, most of the wells along the southern route would be already dry. So the plan that offered the best chances of success, we agreed, was to go via Aleppo, provided the French, who occupy this region, would give us permission. When, in Beirut, we had outlined our plans to General Gouraud, the French high commissioner in Syria, he had replied cryptically, "But why not?" which we had taken for assent; but, when we called upon Colonel Catroux, the officer of *chasseurs d'Afrique* who was military governor of Damascus, we were met by excuses and evasions. The tribes were making trouble along the Euphrates, we were told; there had been heavy fighting in the vicinity of Deir-es-Zor; and, for the time being at least, the route was distinctly unsafe for Europeans. To emphasize the unwisdom of our plan, the colonel told us in gruesome detail of the exceedingly unpleasant things that the Arabs had done to the French soldiers who had fallen into their hands. But even if Colonel Catroux had given us permission, we could not have obtained transportation, for, in view of the activity of Bedouin raiding bands, it was obviously out of the question to descend the Euphrates on rafts—the customary method of making the trip in antebellum days—nor could we find a motor-car owner in Damascus who was willing to take the risk, notwithstanding that we offered as much as two thousand dollars to any one who would undertake the journey.

"But it 's a small fortune we are offering you," I said to one Levantine who was the proud possessor of a ramshackle car. "You could n't make as much money as that in a year here in Damascus."

"What good will money do me," he demanded, "if I have my throat cut? I would rather be poor and alive in Damascus than rich and dead in the desert."

"But you are taking no more chances than we are," I persisted.

"That is quite true," he admitted, "but the difference is that you are willing to take them and I am not."

Nor was it practicable to organize a caravan of sufficient strength to undertake the journey by the direct route, where the danger of attack was equally great and where we could not count on protection from the French. In most frontier countries, such as East Africa, for example, it is a comparatively simple matter to arrange for expeditions into the hinterland. Indeed, there are men in Mombasa and Nairobi who make this their profession. All you have to do is to cable to one of these professional guides, stating where you wish to go, the number in your party, and whether you want to travel light, on the cheap and hungry, or *en prince,* with caviar and champagne, and, when you arrive at the starting-point, everything is arranged down to the minutest detail. But not so in Arabia. There the traveler finds himself confronted by precisely the same conditions that prevailed two thousand years ago. There professional guides and outfitters are unknown; and the difficulties of travel are enormously increased, moreover, by the complexities of the political situation.

So it looked as though we would be compelled to abandon our cherished dream of an overland journey and accept the offer of Sir Wyndham Deedes, the British high commissioner in Palestine, who had wired us that, if we could wait three weeks and were prepared to pay six hundred pounds for our passage, the War Office would send us from Jerusalem to Baghdad by airplane. The British military authorities maintain a fortnightly airmail service between Cairo and Baghdad, and Field-Marshal Allenby, at the suggestion of Sir Wyndham Deedes, had courteously offered to place at our disposal one of the huge Vickers-Vimy planes used in this work. But, though the prospect of flying across Arabia on a modern magic carpet to the city of the Thousand and One Nights was peculiarly alluring, we hesitated about accepting because of the fact that summer was already at hand, and three weeks' delay would mean that we would reach Mesopotamia at the beginning of the hot season, to say nothing of disarranging our plans for continuing into Persia.

While we were debating the matter over the coffee and cigars in the garden of our hotel one evening, Mr. Palmer, the energetic and efficient young Englishman who is his Britannic Majesty's consul in Damascus, dropped in upon us.

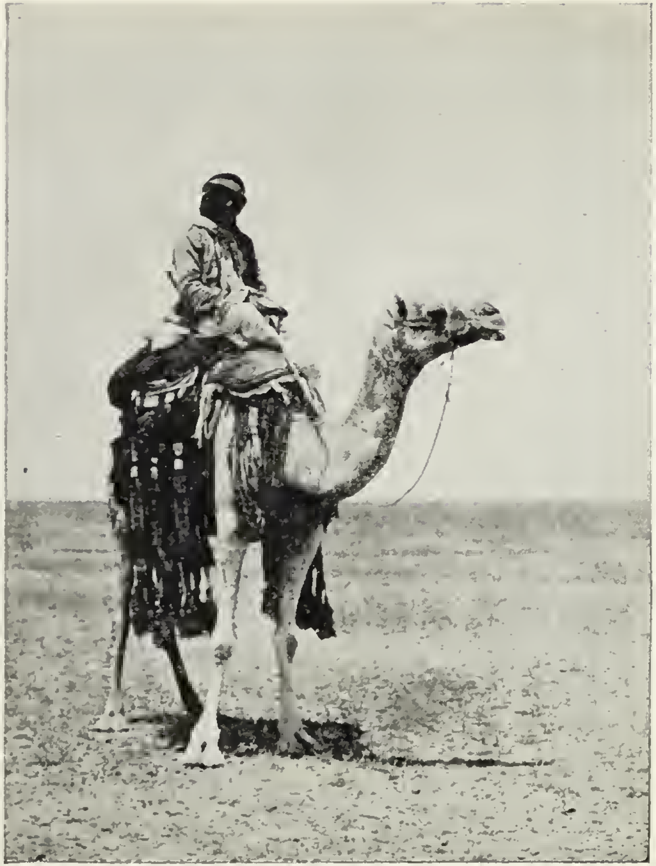
"I say," he began as I offered him a cigar, and Hutchings clapped his hands for the waiter to bring a whisky and soda, "I 've just heard of something that may solve your troubles for you. There 's an old Arab camel merchant here in Damascus named Mohammed Bassam—made himself a millionaire during the war supplying Allenby with horses and camels—absolutely reliable and all that sort of thing. My dragoman has just told me that Mohammed Bassam has a caravan starting for Baghdad to-morrow. It 's only a small outfit, I understand—not over fifty camels—but it will travel fast and, by avoiding the more frequented wells, it may get through without being troubled by the Beddos. And here 's another thing. Mohammed Bassam has some sort of a working arrangement with the sheikhs of the tribes you are likely to run into—pays them a regular subsidy to leave his caravans alone, I fancy—so he should be able to put you across if any one can."

"Fine!" we exclaimed in chorus. "Lead us to him!"

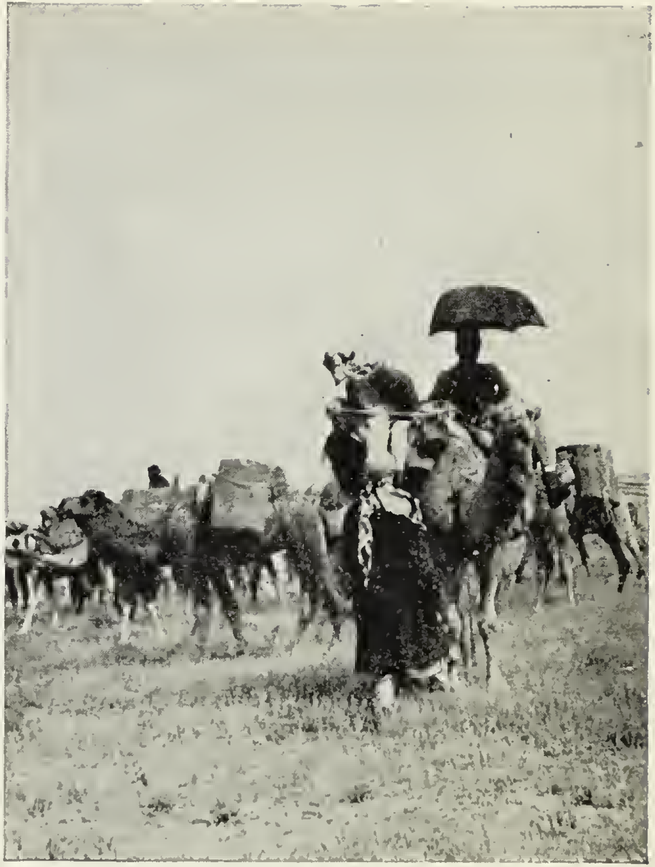
The following morning, taking Mr. Meshaka, the British dragoman, along to do the interpreting, we called on Mohammed Bassam at his place of business in the bazaars—a warehouse, its dim interior piled high with bales of merchandise, in a tortuous alley leading from the Street Which Is Called Straight. He was a white-bearded, dignified Arab whose patriarchal appearance and somewhat taciturn manner masked a razor-keen mind. He wore the snuff-colored *abiyeh,* embroidered in gold, affected by town Arabs of the upper class; the yellow scarf wound about his turban indicated that he had made the *hadj* to the Holy Places; and, as it was the fasting month of Ramadan, he did not smoke, finding occupation for his slender, nervous fingers by toying with a string of amber beads. Yes, he admitted, he had a caravan starting for Baghdad that very afternoon. It was

A halt for the night in the Tulul-es-Safa. The cars have been drawn up in a *zariba,* or hollow square. Sherin is preparing supper, and Hutchings is on guard.

Nightfall in the desert. The camels have been unloaded and turned out to graze, the tents have been pitched, and the Arabs, their faces turned toward Mecca, are kneeling for the evening prayer.



The leader of our caravan, Sheikh Ghazi Mansour, who looked like the Arabs of fiction.



On the camel in the foreground are two passengers, Abbas Effendi (under the umbrella) and his son-in-law.

encamped a dozen miles outside the city, awaiting his final orders. We could accompany the caravan if we chose, though desert travel, he added, was very fatiguing for those unaccustomed to it. But, we explained, we could not possibly leave on such short notice. We must have at least forty-eight hours in which to purchase our camp equipment and provisions. One couldn't start across Arabia with a pair of pajamas and a tooth-brush. After pondering for a moment, Mohammed Bassam said that he thought it could be arranged. The caravan would start as planned, he explained, and he would send us out in motor-cars the second day following, to overtake it. He would instruct the caravan leader to wait for us at the Tulul-es-Safa, which, I gathered, was a small valley, with pasturage for the camels, two days' march from Damascus. To this we agreed. Now came the important question of the cost. Unfortunately for our pocket-books, we were Americans. To the Arab mind, that very fact was conclusive proof that we were rich. In dealing with foreigners the Arab has a sliding scale of prices. The Greek and the Armenian, who share the reputation of being the closest bargainers in the Levant, can usually obtain prices but little, if any, in excess of those asked of natives. In dealing with a *franzawi* (a term which the Arab applies indiscriminately to all

Europeans of Latin extraction) a moderate price must be quoted or the deal is off. The *inglesi* will bluster and attempt to bargain, but, provided it is not too exorbitant, he will usually pay what is asked. But the *amerikani* has the reputation of paying without protest the sum demanded which, as might be expected, is usually excessive. But we were accompanied by the dragoman of the British consulate, which Mohammed Bassam interpreted as meaning that, though we were evidently persons of importance, it would not be good policy to give his greed full rein. The old Arab appraised us shrewdly. Camels were very dear, he explained; water was scarce; there was the ever-present danger of encountering bands of Bedouin raiders; we would have much impedimenta; to carry it would require at least six baggage-camels; and the cost of the cars to take us out to the Tulul-es-Safa must be taken into account. At length he named his figure, one hundred and eighty Egyptian pounds, or about nine hundred dollars. The price was exorbitant, of course, but, to put it inelegantly, Hadji Mohammed had us by the short hair, and he knew it. Instead of Baghdad or bust, it looked as though it would be Baghdad and busted.

Being familiar with the Arab character as the result of many years spent in Eastern lands, I stipulated that Mohammed Bassam should accompany us to the British consulate, where we would put the agreement into writing, for I knew full well that the old camel merchant, who had large interests in Baghdad, would hesitate before breaking a contract which bore a British consular seal. Acting on Palmer's advice, we insisted on the insertion of a clause stipulating that, in the event of the caravan's being held up by Bedouins, Mohammed Bassam would himself pay all tolls or ransoms. To this he reluctantly assented, qualifying his assent, however, by announcing that he declined to assume any responsibility for the acts of Allah.

"Just what do you mean by 'acts of Allah'?" I inquired.

"If, for example, you should be shot or have your throats cut," he answered dryly.

Which had the effect of momentarily dampening our enthusiasm.

In the Bedouin country a passport is of about as much use as a certificate of membership in a high school debating society, but in order that we might be able to establish our nationality in case of need, Allen, the American consul, obligingly gave us a letter in Arabic, made impressive by a large gilt seal and a bow of scarlet ribbon, addressed to Ibn Sa'ud, the most powerful and the most feared of the great chieftains of the hinterland. Should we fall into the hands of his followers, we hoped that this document would serve as a sort of stay of execution. I don't know what Allen said in the letter, but he must have made it fairly strong, for when I showed it to one of the Arabs with the caravan he salaamed three times. From an Arab politician of somewhat dubious repute named Oseimé Pasha, who, it was rumored, acted as a secret intermediary between the French authorities in Syria and the Bedouins, I obtained letters of introduction to the sheikhs of certain other tribes that we were likely to encounter en route. We were warned, however, that these letters might have a dangerous repercussion, for it seemed that Oseimé Pasha, though *persona grata* with some of the tribes, was correspondingly distrusted and detested by others, so that, should I make a mistake and present his letters to the wrong parties, we might receive a much warmer reception than we had counted on. To show Oseimé's letters to one of Ibn Sa'ud's chieftains, for example, would evoke about the same brand of cordiality that might be expected if one presented a letter of introduction from Eamonn de Valera to the president of the Irish Free State.

In outfitting the expedition we were confronted by the fact that we did not know how long it would take to make the journey, and consequently we had no idea how much food and water would be required. Mohammed Bassam had told us that, provided everything went smoothly, we should sight the Euphrates in about eleven days, but if the camels fell sick, or if we were forced to make considerable detours in order to avoid hostile Bedouins, it might conceivably take double that time. And time, I might add, is the cheapest thing there is in the desert. In fact, it has no value whatsoever.

The most important question was that of providing ourselves with an adequate supply of water. Northern Arabia, it should be understood, is a land virtually destitute of lakes and streams, and during the dry season even the infrequent wells cannot be depended upon; so that the provision of an ample store of drinking-water is of primary importance. The Arabs carry their own drinking supply in large goatskins, two of which are usually slung under the belly of each baggage-camel, but the water in these, usually of doubtful origin, quickly acquires a taste which makes it almost undrinkable for Europeans. One of the Turkish passengers with our caravan always took the precaution of holding a handkerchief over the mouth of his water-skin when drinking. When it was removed the handkerchief would have a ring of sediment the size of a quarter-dollar. But such precautions are rarely observed by the natives themselves, being regarded, I imagine, as something of the nature of an insult to Allah. When the supply in the skins runs low, it is replenished at the desert wells with water so inconceivably foul that no one but an Arab could drink it and live. I assume, however, that every Arab susceptible to zymotic diseases died thousands of years ago, and that, by the law of the survival of the fittest, all Arabs born now are immune from filth-diseases. This is the only explanation of why they can drink sewage-water with impunity, go for months at a time without bathing, wear garments that are frequently not only caked with dirt and soaked with sweat but crawl with vermin, and thrive under conditions that would kill a white man in a week.

The chief essential for desert travel is water. It affects everything. If it is plentiful, the men are good-tempered and the beasts are willing. But if it is scarce, men and beasts alike become irritable and quarrelsome. I have seen men who at home are the personification of generosity quarrel bitterly over who had had the most drinks from a canteen. You never know what water means until you are where none is to be had—particularly if the mercury stands at 130 and the air is like a blast from an open furnace-door. The lips crack, the mouth tastes like a blotter, the tongue feels like a dry sponge. The quantity of water which one drinks in the desert is perfectly incredible. We figured on a gallon per day per person, which seemed a ridiculously liberal allowance, but the ten cases of Evian and Vittel which we took with us would have been exhausted long before the journey was over had we not realized the danger in time and cut our daily consumption almost in half. The water drawn from the desert wells, filthy as it is, can, of course, be purified by boiling, but in taste, smell, and color it is so nauseating that one washes in it, much less drinks it, only as a last resort. Speaking of water, there are three commandments which should be rigidly observed by every desert traveler. First, never, in any circumstances, drink unbottled water that has not been boiled. Second, never put all your water on one camel, for there is always the chance that the beast may stray or roll. Third, always keep your water *in front of you.*

For the guidance of those who contemplate a desert journey, I will be pardoned, I hope, if I interrupt my narrative long enough to enumerate the principal items of our outfit, which, though satisfactory on the whole, in certain respects could have been improved upon had we had more time and a greater variety of goods from which to choose. Though the bazaars of Eastern cities are a source of endless fascination to the tourist, they are lacking in many of the requisites for equipping an expedition. Hence I should strongly advise any one who purposes traveling in the interior of Asia to obtain the principal articles of his equipment in the great outfitting shops of London or New York. To my way of thinking, half the pleasure of a trip is in getting the outfit together.

There are certain hardy souls who start on an expedition with the announcement that they believe in "roughing it," which usually means that they disdain the comfort of a bed and insist on sleeping on the ground. Now, a quarter of a century of travel on the world's frontiers has taught me that the man who avails himself of comforts when they are available invariably suffers less from exposure, fatigue, and sickness, and, consequently, remains the better tempered and makes the best companion. So, whenever conditions permit, I insist upon sleeping on a bed. Our beds were folding canvas cots which had been left in Damascus by the Germans upon their evacuation. They were the only camp beds of any description obtainable in Damascus, and we were so enthusiastic about finding them that the Syrian merchant who owned them charged us about four times as much as we would have had to pay for a better article at home. By far the best camp bed that I have ever seen is of American manufacture: a folding cot covered with a ∩-shaped hood of canvas which affords ample protection against sun and rain. At either end of the hood are windows, fitted with isinglass and mosquito-netting, and the sides can be raised or lowered at will. With such a bed one could dispense with a tent altogether, for it is really a bed and tent in one.

A metal folding table did service for the four of us, and we each had a folding chair, which is by no means as luxurious as it sounds, for a comfortable chair is almost a necessity after a long day in the saddle. Each of us also carried an air-pillow and two blankets, the heaviest we could obtain, for the nights in the desert are often bitterly cold. As it is next to impossible to keep one's blankets clean in desert travel, and as I have a constitutional aversion to sleeping in soiled bedding, I purchased in the bazaars four yards of ordinary cotton sheeting, which a deft-handed, dark-eyed damsel in the local agency of the Singer Company sewed up for me so as to form a rude sleeping-bag. Once within that, it did not matter so much about the condition of the blankets, and I was, moreover, safe from the attacks of vermin. Each of us also provided himself with two yards of mosquito-netting, for though there are no mosquitoes in those parts of the desert that are waterless, they are almost unendurable in the neighborhood of the wells.

Sherin did the cooking on two small "Primus" stoves which we brought with us from Constantinople and for which we had to carry a supply of gasolene. For light we depended upon cheap native candle lanterns of tin and mica, supplemented by a very serviceable type of electric torch, which, by working a lever, generates its own power and has no battery to give out. Our cups and plates were of agate-ware, which, because of lack of water, had to be cleaned with sand. Each of us carried a two-quart *bidon*, or water-bottle, of the French army pattern, which, when the felt covering had been soaked in water, would keep the contents surprisingly cool for several hours at a time. As rubber ground-cloths were unobtainable in Damascus, I purchased four short strips of straw matting, which, placed beside the beds, obviated the necessity of dressing while standing on the bare ground.

Our arms consisted of Colt service automatics, .45 caliber, for experience has taught me that, when you need a weapon at all, you need one with sufficient shocking power to drop an assailant before he can get to close quarters. In addition we carried four Mauser rifles, loaned us for the journey by the French military authorities. When I go again, however, I shall take with me from America a high-power sporting rifle, together with a leather bucket for carrying it on the saddle. It is well to remember, however, that the importation of firearms into Asiatic countries is attended by many formalities, so that the prospective traveler would do well to communicate with the British and French embassies in Washington before leaving the United States. A sufficient supply of ammunition should also be taken along, as it is impossible to obtain cartridges for American-made weapons in Syria.

Minor items comprised a supply of cold cream for sunburn; eau de Cologne, which is wonderfully refreshing after a long day in the saddle, particularly when there is no water to wash in; a bottle of iodine for disinfecting wounds; a supply of quinine tablets for fever; a bottle of arnica or Pond's Extract for sprains and bruises; chlorodyne for neuralgia; aspirin for headaches and colds; boracic lotion for the eyes, which frequently become badly inflamed in the desert; spirits of ammonia for insect-bites; arrowroot, castor-oil, and a few other simple remedies, including one for dysentery. It must be remembered that there are no doctors in the desert, and that the traveler must not only be prepared to take care of himself in case of accident or illness, but is frequently called upon to attend sick or wounded Arabs, who believe that all foreigners have a knowledge of medicine.

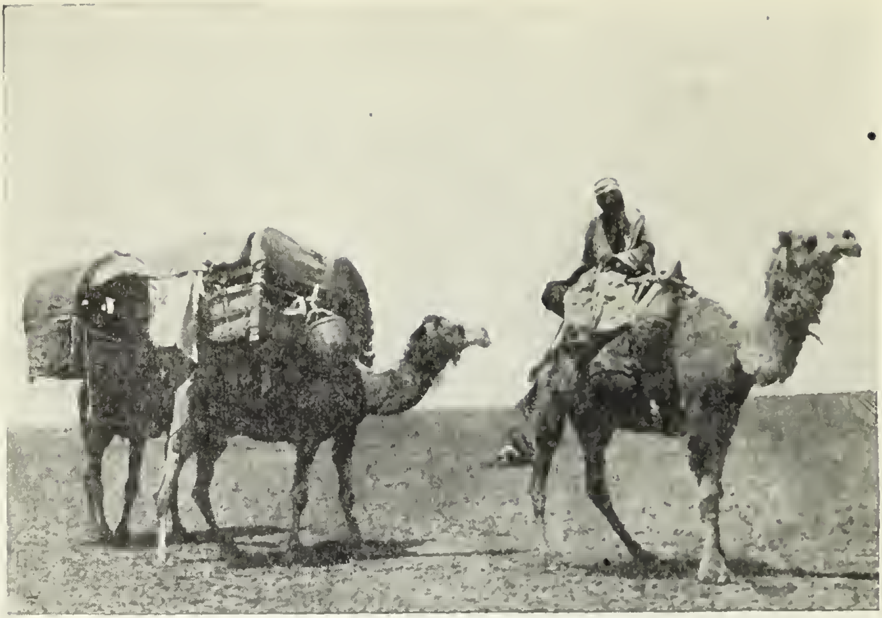
Powerful field-glasses are extremely useful; those I carried were of German manufacture, twelve magnifications. A small stock of cheap field-glasses, jack-knives, mouth-organs, *keffiehs,* and silk handkerchiefs in bright colors should be taken along as presents for the native chieftains. I presented the sheikh of one nomad tribe which we encountered with a revolving fan of celluloid, worked by a plunger, which I had picked up in Paris, thereby winning his undying friendship. Other useful items were a dozen tins of lime-drops, which, by assuaging thirst, enabled us to economize in the use of water; and a plentiful supply of cheap cigarettes for gifts, for a Bedouin will do more for a cigarette than for a gold piece. Speaking of gold pieces reminds me that there is no need for money in the desert, save for the payment of ransom in case of capture, and the less you have with you the better. One hundred dollars per person is ample, and should be carried in Turkish liras and medjidies, the only currency with which the Bedouin is familiar. Letters of credit can be cashed in any of the larger cities of Syria, Mesopotamia, and Persia.

Though we carried a supply of spirits, we used them sparingly, usually only at night, after a hard day's journey. The best drink for the desert, or, indeed, for any frontier country, is hot tea, perhaps with a dash of rum in it. We also took along two cases of light wines—Médoc and Sauterne—which we diluted with water, and a single bottle of champagne, which we opened with great ceremony to celebrate our arrival at the Euphrates. Though the finest coffee in the world is grown in Arabia, the Arabs prepare it with a seed which gives it a peculiar aromatic flavor, and serve it in cups of the size of thimbles. Hence, if you are accustomed to use coffee as a drink and not as a liqueur, a condensed coffee, which comes in small tins and which only requires the addition of hot water, should be taken from the United States, as it is not procurable in the East or in Europe. The juice of tinned tomatoes quenches the thirst more effectively than anything I know, but it is not always procurable. We tried the experiment of substituting chewing-gum, but this is a producer of heat and is not satisfactory save in cold countries. Curiously enough, we were unable to obtain in Damascus any of the familiar American standbys, such as bully beef, corned beef hash, baked beans, and hardtack; but at the French military canteen we found luxuries in endless variety: pâtés de fois gras, tuna fish, anchovies, Camembert cheese, Bar-le-Duc jellies, tinned artichokes, asparagus, and hearts of palm, so that we might have been eating at Ciro's or Voisin's so far as our food was concerned.

Proper clothing is of the utmost importance in a region subject to such extreme variations of temperature as Arabia. To illustrate the suddenness of these variations, it is recorded that in the desert north of Hail, in the month of February, the thermometer fell from seventy-eight degrees a little before sunset to eighteen degrees a quarter of an hour after. That was exceptional, of course, but variations of thirty to forty degrees in an hour are by no means uncommon. Hence, though garments of tropical weight are worn during the day, when the thermometer frequently registers 130 degrees, it is necessary to have clothing suitable for late autumn in America ready to put on at sunset. The jacket should be of the so-called "tropico" cloth, which protects the wearer from the actinic rays of the sun and is now generally used by British officers in India and Mesopotamia. And the more pockets the jacket has the better, for there is no end to the articles which one has to carry on the person. Jodhpores, which are breeches and leggings in one and can be made by any Indian tailor, are more satisfactory for camel-riding than ordinary breeches and leggings, but, if the latter are worn, they should be made of canvas instead of leather, with buttons, in the Newmarket pattern. For hot countries I have my shirts made with elbow-sleeves, with a low soft collar attached, and in lieu of a necktie I wear a large silk handkerchief, which leaves the throat free and protects the back of the neck. The British troops in Mesopotamia are required to wear spine-pads—triangular pieces of quilted cloth which button on the shirt and protect the spine from the deadly rays of the sun—but I doubt if these are necessary save at the height of the hot season. For long journeys on camelback, Europeans, whose muscles are not developed like those of the Arabs, sometimes bind themselves tightly with the long *cummerbunds,* or sashes, worn by France's African soldiery, thus providing a support for the back and abdomen. The most satisfactory overgarment is either a "British warm" or a regulation officer's trench-coat, with detachable fleece lining, which provides ample protection against both cold and rain and at night can be used as an extra covering. Tinted goggles—violet-colored glass is the best—are a necessity, not alone as a protection from the blinding sun-glare, but because science has discovered that the eyes provide a ready medium for sunstroke. Perhaps the most important single item of clothing is the helmet, which, in order to afford real security, must be heavy to the point of discomfort, with a brim of sufficient width to effectually shield the back of the neck from the sun. The white, mushroom-shaped affairs, with a length of green veiling festooned around the crown and hanging down behind, went out with the Victorian era. I have never seen one save on the motion-picture screen or in the pages of a novel. If water can be spared, wet handkerchiefs should be kept inside the helmet, or, better still, a wet bath-towel, thereby reducing the temperature around the wearer's head several degrees. Boots and shoes should be large enough to allow for the swelling of the feet from the heat and should have exceptionally stout soles, for great stretches of the desert are strewn with flint-like fragments of volcanic rock, which will cut an ordinary pair of boots to pieces in a few hours of walking. After a long, hot day nothing is more restful than to exchange one's breeches for shorts, golf-stockings, and slippers. And at night a woolen cholera-band will prevent an abdominal chill, with its frequently fatal consequences. Lounge-suits of light-weight flannel, and rubber-soled shoes of white

In the desert. All day long, day in and day out, we rode across a burning, desolate waste, flatter and hotter than it is possible to imagine. The whole of our world had become a flat, brown disk, reflecting the sun-rays like a sheet of copper.

A water-hole in the desert. With the thermometer standing at 130 (and no shade!) even a filthy pool like this, half water and half mud, is a welcome sight.



All of the passengers, save only ourselves, made the journey in camel litters. The litters used by the women are covered, with slatted sides, and look like chicken-coops.

When the caravan halts for the night the litters are set upon the ground, and in them the women sleep, sometimes for thirty days at a stretch.

buckskin, should be carried for wear in the towns, and it should also be borne in mind that evening-clothes are as imperative in official circles in Baghdad and Teheran as they are in London or Paris. That, I think, pretty well covers the subject of equipment.

To overtake the caravan we started from Damascus at daybreak, three decrepit Fords, piloted by the most villainous-looking trio of town Arabs that I have ever set eyes upon, being required for the transportation of ourselves and such of our impedimenta as had not preceded us. Outside the city we were joined by a fourth car, carrying two fellow-travelers: a handsome young Syrian Arab named Fuad, who, it seemed, had been an officer of the Hedjaz forces during the war, and was now going to Baghdad to accept a commission under King Feisal, and a slender, dark-skinned native girl. The latter we assumed to be his wife until Fuad naïvely remarked that, instead of addressing her as "madame" we should call her "mademoiselle." But in Arabia, where the moral law is as easy as an old shoe, the absence of a wedding certificate does not even provoke comment. The party was completed by an elderly Baghdad Arab, as tough as rawhide and tanned to the color of a much-used saddle, who was to guide us to our rendezvous in the Tulul-es-Safa.

Now, the Tulul-es-Safa, instead of being a definite spot, as we had supposed, is the name applied to a great shallow valley, or rather a series of small valleys, formed by ranges of low, volcanic hills. In area it is almost as large as an English county. The floor of the valley, if so uneven a surface can be termed a floor, is gridironed by countless low ridges tufted with bunch-grass, and in places covered with a low acacia jungle which looks not unlike the sagebrush of our own Southwest.

We topped the range which hems in the Tulul-es-Safa at sunset, prepared to look down upon a cluster of black tents, the smoke of dung-fed campfires, and a line of hobbled camels. But, to our dismay and to the evident astonishment of our Arab guide, not a sign of the caravan was to be seen. Night was falling fast, and the going had now become so rough that it was obviously impossible for the cars to proceed farther in the darkness; so there was nothing left for us to do but to halt where we were and to make ourselves as comfortable as circumstances permitted until morning. As ill luck would have it, however, our camp equipment and the bulk of our provisions had gone forward with the caravan, so that we found ourselves in the desert at nightfall without tents or blankets and with only a small supply of food and water. To make matters worse, we were now in dangerous country, far beyond the protection of the French outposts and an easy prey for any Bedouin raiders who might happen along.

That the danger of a night attack was by no means imaginary was sharply brought home to us when our Arab guide ordered the cars to be drawn up in a *zariba,* or hollow square, thus affording us some measure of protection against bullets, and sternly forbade the building of a fire, or even the striking of matches, because, as he explained, the sight of a light would bring down on us any Bedouins who might be in the neighborhood, but who otherwise might not detect our presence. I can recall having spent few more anxious or uncomfortable nights. I don't know whether you have ever attempted to sleep in a flivver, but if you have, you will agree with me that Mr. Ford's ideas of what constitutes comfort are radically different from those of the late Mr. Pullman. There may be some position in which one can sleep in a Tin Lizzie with some degree of comfort, but if there is, I have never found it. And, probably because we had no blankets with us, the night was exceptionally cold.

We agreed to stand watch in turn, two hours at a stretch, for Fuad and his mademoiselle were already fast asleep in the tonneau of their car, apparently oblivious to the lurking dangers, while our drivers, who were town Arabs and wholly unaccustomed to the desert, were too terrified to be depended upon. As for the guide, he disappeared in the darkness immediately after we halted, slipping back into camp after midnight to report that he had scoured the surrounding hills without finding a trace of the caravan. Standing watch in the desert at night is trying on the nerves. A rustle in the underbrush—a prowling hyena or a jackal, perhaps—becomes the stealthy footsteps of approaching enemies; the near-by darkness seems to be peopled by suspicious shadows, which keep one's finger constantly on the rifle-trigger. About midnight I was awakened from a fitful sleep by Ladew, who was unstrapping his kit-bag.

"What are you doing?" I grumbled irritably.

"I 'm getting out my dinner-coat," he replied between chattering teeth. "I 'm almost frozen."

The idea of putting on a dinner-coat in a Ford car in the Arabian desert struck me as being distinctly humorous.

"Don't you want me to put the studs in your shirt?" I inquired with mock solicitousness. "And find your pumps for you?"

"Oh, go to the devil!" he responded rudely.

The desert, as I was to discover long before the journey was over, is no place for humor, no matter how well intended.

It was not until the following day—a day during which we forced the now openly mutinous drivers, who were terrified lest they should not have enough petrol to make the return journey to Damascus, to push on almost at the point of the pistol—before we caught up with the caravan. We had known since dawn that we were on its track, however, for every mile or so our Arab guide would leap from the car to examine signs that were invisible to our untrained eyes—camel spoor, faint footprints on the banks of a dried-up water-hole, tufts of hair adhering to the thorny acacia scrub, scraps of food, and the like. Never, not even in Africa, have I seen such an extraordinary display of the tracker's skill. Our Arab could have given points to *Uncas,* the hero of "The Last of the Mohicans." After one of these scrutinies he straightened up, as though satisfied at last, and with an air of finality announced, "We will overtake the caravan an hour before sunset." I confess that at the time I thought he was bluffing; but, sure enough, as the hands of my wrist-watch showed the hour, he pointed to the eastward and we descried, far off across the tawny waste, a moving cloud of yellow dust, which resolved itself, as we drew nearer, into a long line of camels, half a hundred or more, strung out across the desert. At their head, a few hundred yards in advance, rode the caravan leader, perched high on a white *hejin*.

I have never seen a more completely satisfying figure than Sheikh Ghazi Mansour. He was almost too picturesque to be real—a tall, slender, hawk-nosed, black-bearded Arab of the Hauran. As he sat on his high red saddle, with its long tassels almost sweeping the ground, swaying easily to the motion of his racing dromedary, his keen, Semitic face peering out from beneath his red and white *keffieh,* his voluminous black *abieh* floating out behind him, one hand resting on his hip, the other grasping his camel-stick as though it were a baton, he looked for all the world like the Arabs of fiction and the motion-picture screen.

Ghazi Mansour—he is a *hadji* three times over, having thrice made the pilgrimage to the Holy Places—earns a modest and precarious livelihood by conducting caravans across the Syrian Desert, or, as the Arabs call it, the Bâdiet-esh-Shâm. Precarious, because there is always the danger of his being held up by a marauding band and his camels, which are his only source of income, stolen. Being himself the head of a small tribe of the Hauran, he is immune, however, from spoliation by those tribes with whose sheikhs he is on friendly terms or with whom he or his employer, Mohammed Bassam, has a financial arrangement. We rode with him for many days, during which time we grew to like and admire him. He can neither read nor write, the only home he has ever known is a black tent in the desert, and, as we were to discover later on, one did not have to scratch very deeply to reveal the barbarian; but it is seldom that I have encountered a finer gentleman.

The caravan, we found, consisted of some threescore camels and about half that number of persons, five or six of whom were women, traveling with their men-folk to Baghdad. As you will journey with us for some hundreds of miles, permit me to introduce to you some of our fellow-travelers. To begin with, there was Rahat Effendi, an elderly Turk who was returning with his family, after a visit in Constantinople, to his home in Mosul. He had been an officer of the Turkish army for more than a quarter of a century, it seemed, and around the camp-fire at night, with Fuad acting as interpreter, he would tell us of those strange and mysterious cities of Inner Arabia—Nejd, Riyadh, Hail—where he had been stationed. He was accompanied by his wife and his daughter and his daughter's husband and their child, a wee morsel of humanity a few months old. They were nice people, were the Rahat family—simple, generous, considerate; what we in America sometimes describe as "home-folks." More than once during the earlier stages of the journey, when I was reeling in my saddle from exhaustion and the sun, Rahat Effendi would insist on my exchanging places with his son-in-law, who shared a camel-litter with him, and, taking his own cushions, the old Turk would wedge them about me so as to ease my aching back, and for hours at a time would hold his umbrella over my throbbing head to shield it from the pitiless sun. Despite the fact that neither of us spoke the other's tongue, we managed to converse after a fashion, politics being a favorite topic. I asked him one day what he thought of Feisal, the young Arab emir whom the British have placed on the Mesopotamian throne. Rahat held up the length of slender, fragile cane which the Arabs carry. "Feisal," he said. Then, touching the shoulder of the powerful beast on which we were riding, he added, "England."

Then there was Abbas Effendi, formerly a captain in the Turkish army, but who, being an Arab, had deserted the Turks early in the World War to join his compatriots who were fighting for the independence of Arabia under the Emir Feisal.

Now he was on his way to rejoin his former commander, become king of 'Iraq, as Mesopotamia is now called, who had offered him a commission in the army he was organizing. Accompanying him were two other former Shereefian officers, Baghdad-bound for the same reason. Abbas Effendi, who spoke French with tolerable fluency, spent the entire journey in his covered litter, devoting his waking hours to reading risqué French novels and studying the Koran.

And finally there was the little Arab, Achmet, whom Ghazi Mansour had designated as our personal attendant. His face was wreathed in a perpetual smile, and he was the most faithful, cheerful, willing fellow that I have ever seen. His duties began when he awakened us at three o'clock in the morning, and he was still at work when we fell asleep at night. I once saw him walk thirty miles, under a terrifying sun, in elastic-sided shoes of patent leather, his proudest possession, yet he was apparently as fresh at the end of the day as when we started. His connection with us terminated somewhat abruptly, however, when Ladew caught him smoking the last of his treasured Jockey Club cigarettes, which he had brought from Constantinople.

All of the passengers save only ourselves made the journey in camel-litters, than which no more uncomfortable means of transport could possibly be devised. A litter consists of a pair of wooden platforms, slung one on each side of the camel, like panniers, and held in place by a network of stout cords. On each platform are a thick mattress and a number of bolsters and cushions, on which you half sit, half recline, hanging on for dear life to the cord network or anything else that offers. When the camel kneels or rises, unless you have tight hold of something, the chances are that you will be thrown violently to the ground. The litter is too short to lie down in, and it is tilted at such an angle that you cannot let your legs hang over the side. To the native, who invariably sits cross-legged, this is of no importance, but to a European, who cannot sit thus for any length of time without suffering from cramps, it is very trying indeed. Hutchings solved the difficulty with great ingenuity, however, by lying flat on his back on the litter and resting his feet on the camel's hump, as though on a mantelpiece. The effect thus produced was, it is true, somewhat informal, but in the desert formality does not greatly matter. The litters used by the women are covered, with slatted sides, and look like the crates used for shipping breakable merchandise, which is, indeed, precisely what they are. These litters necessitate a very cramped position on the part of their occupants, whose legs, incased in gaudily striped stockings of the most violent hues held up by pink or yellow garters, usually protrude unblushingly. For the only part of her person that a Moslem woman is particular about concealing is her face. She would never understand the attitude of the Venus de Medici.

We found that the reason the caravan had pressed on so rapidly, instead of waiting for us, was because of the danger of running short of water. Though in hot weather a camel can go for four days without drinking, and in cold weather from eight to ten, its rider is not equipped by nature to practise that form of domestic economy. During the winter and early spring there is always a certain amount of water in the Hamad, but by May the pools and water-holes have dried up, and the only chance of replenishing the drinking-supply is at certain wells, and even these are not always to be depended upon. The first of these wells was at El Garah, five days' journey from Damascus. Now, the very fact that there was known to be water at El Garah made it unsafe for a small caravan like ours, for the chances were at least even that we would find there a band of Bedouins, whose attitude we could only conjecture. They *might* permit us to water our beasts and fill our goatskins and continue unmolested, and then again they might not. But our water was running low, and there was nothing for it but to take the risk. In the desert there are no hospitable farm-houses, with well-sweeps and old oaken buckets, where the parched traveler can quench his thirst.

So we approached El Garah with anxiety and caution. The wells are situated at the base of a precipitous plateau of limestone, which rises abruptly from the surrounding plain. But, before debouching upon this plain, the road which we were following had to pass through a long and winding valley formed by ranges of low hills. For a surprise attack no better spot could be selected. As we approached this danger-point Ghazi Mansour borrowed my field-glasses and, ascending a near-by rise, scanned the level waste which lay beyond, being careful, however, not to show himself against the sky-line. What he saw was evidently alarming, for he shouted a curt order, whereupon the cry, "Biddu! Biddu!" ran down the line. Then much the same sort of scene was enacted that must have been a commonplace to the pioneers who crossed the Indian country by wagon-train half a century ago. The straggling caravan hastily closed up, the camels bearing the women being placed in the center. Though the French and British authorities permit only one rifle to every ten men of a caravan, this regulation is observed about as strictly as is the Volstead Act, from their places of concealment in the bales of merchandise Mausers and Osmanlis appearing by magic, followed by a rattle of breech-locks as the cartridges were driven home. Half a dozen Arabs raced forward in skirmish order, buckling on their bandoliers as they ran, while others took position well out on either flank. As I was riding a camel when the alarm was sounded, Achmet leaped on my pony without so much as a by-your-leave and, brandishing a rifle over his head, went tearing forward at a gallop to act as a point. The whole manœuver was faultlessly executed, and could not have been improved upon by any soldiers in the world.

As we emerged from the defile we discovered the cause of the alarm, for, coming toward us at a brisk trot across the desert, was a group of camel-riders, whose mounts we recognized, even at that distance, as of the Bedouin racing breed. Through the glasses I could see that each man carried his rifle upright, with the butt resting on his thigh, like a cavalryman. But our anxiety abruptly evaporated when we saw that they had been joined by Achmet, who appeared to be conversing with them as though they were old friends. They proved to be a patrol of French *méharistes* in pursuit of Arab gun-runners, for nowadays, not even in the depths of the desert, can the fugitive from justice escape the long arm of the white man's law. Their leader informed us that our precautions had been by no means needless, however, for a Bedouin war-party, several hundred strong, had left El Garah that very morning. We had missed them by only about six hours. At the time we felt as though we had been cheated out of an adventure which would have provided us with dinner-table conversation for the rest of our lives. But, upon thinking the matter over, I have concluded that perhaps it was just as well that those Bedouins departed before our arrival. For their sheikh, you see, was *not* one of those to whom we bore letters of introduction. If we had met them this book might never have been written. Who knows?

CHAPTER IV

THE PEOPLE OF THE CAMEL

IT is a curious circumstance, when you pause to consider it, that of Arabia, whose shores are skirted almost daily, for upward of two thousand miles, by tourist-laden steamers, which can be reached by airplane from Cairo between breakfast and luncheon of a single day, the Western world has less knowledge than it has of Inner Asia or equatorial Africa or the polar regions. Though in area the peninsula is one third the size of the United States, the Europeans who have penetrated its mysterious interior can be numbered on the fingers of one's two hands. Sadler, Palgrave, Burton, Pelly, Doughty, Lawrence, Leachman, Philby, and two women, Lady Anne Blunt (the granddaughter of Lord Byron) and Miss Gertrude Bell—there you have all, or nearly all, of the names that comprise the brief, intrepid list. Arabia is the only land that has successfully defied the white man and halted the onsweep of civilization, the lives and customs of its ten million inhabitants having remained virtually unchanged since the world was young. It is the sole remaining country on the map considerable areas of which are still marked "unexplored." It is the Last Frontier.

More untruths, more nonsense, have been written about the Arabs than about any race on earth. We of the West have generally formed our mental pictures of the Arabs from fleeting glimpses of unrepresentative individuals—usually "town Arabs"—in the bazaars of North African and Syrian coast towns, from sensational novels written by superficially informed persons in the safety and comfort of Biskra and Damascus hotels, and from ridiculous characterizations, filmed in Hollywood studios and southern California deserts, on the motion-picture screen. We habitually mispronounce his commonest words—"sheikh,"[1] for example—and of the chief cities of the hinterland —Nejd, Riyadh, Jauf, Hail—most of us have never so much as heard. We credit him with qualities which he does not possess; we attribute to him habits of which he has no knowledge; we place him in settings which he has never seen. We picture him as armed with a lance and a long-barreled flintlock, whereas he is amply supplied with modern rifles and machine-guns. We are pleased to think of the Arabs, when we think of

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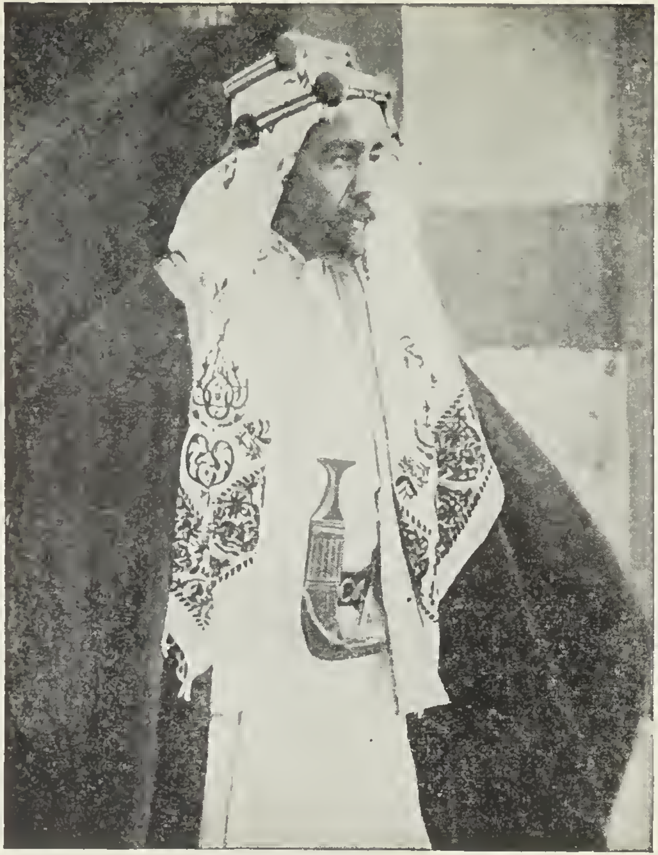
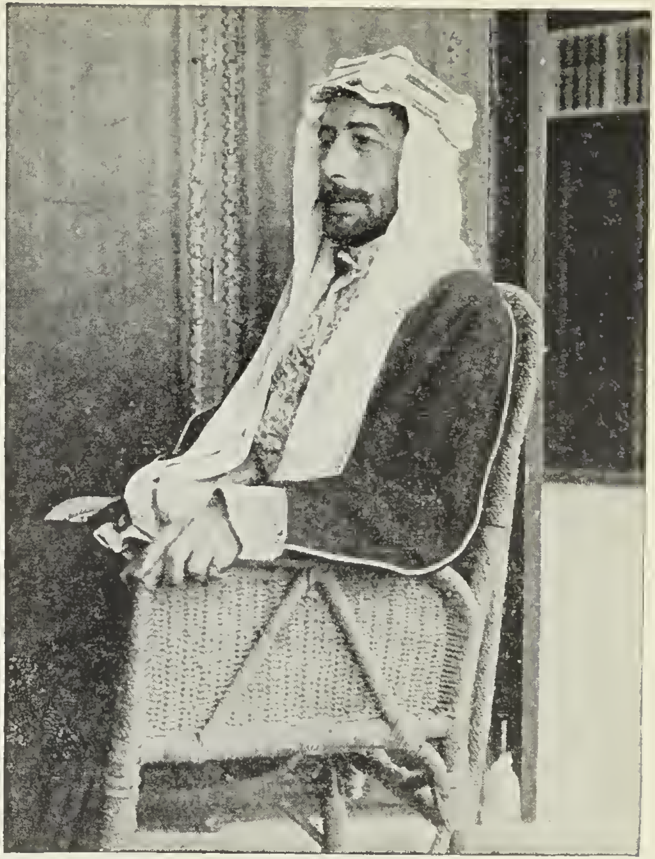
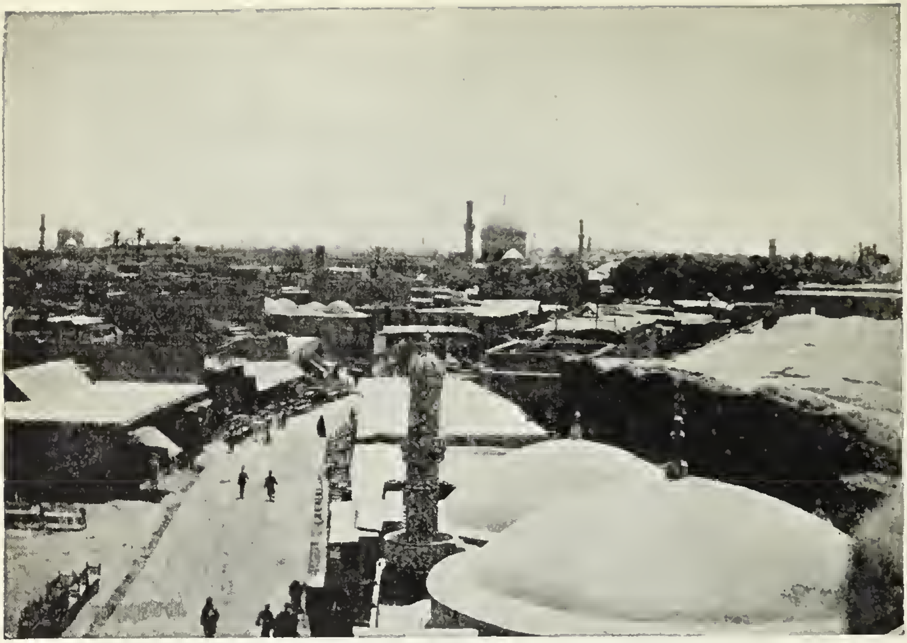
[1] Pronounced as though spelled "shake."



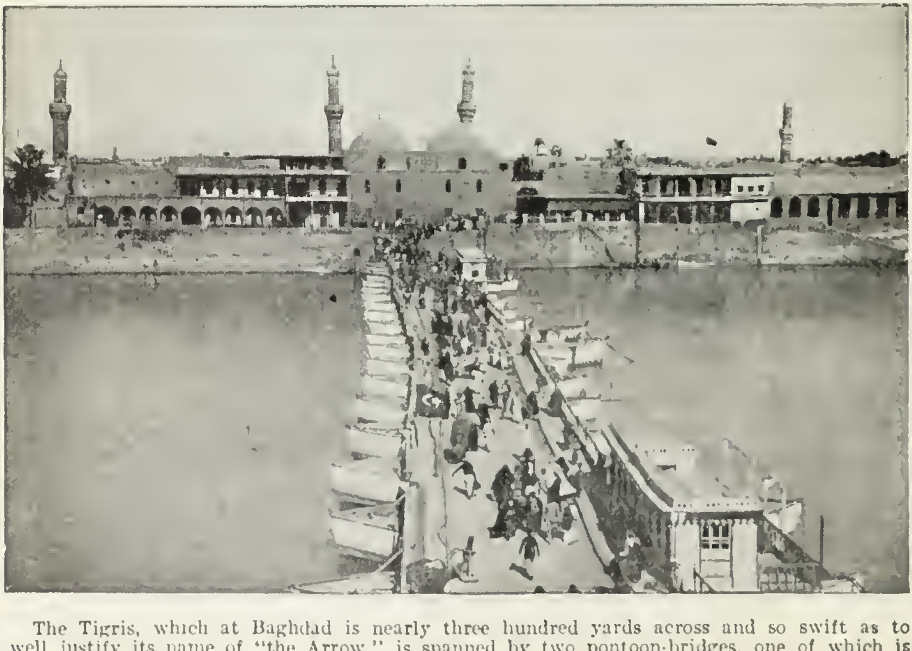
His Royal Highness the Emir Abdullah of Transjordania, eldest son of King Hussein of the Hedjaz.



His Majesty Feisal I, King of 'Iraq. He resembles the ancient Babylonian rulers.



The city of the Thousand and One Nights. Situated in a region where there is no stone and virtually no timber, Baghdad was built of brick and tiles. Hence it is a mud-brown city, the only spots of color being provided by the mosques.



The Tigris, which at Baghdad is nearly three hundred yards across and so swift as to well justify its name of "the Arrow," is spanned by two pontoon-bridges, one of which is shown above.

them at all, as being wholly negligible from a political or military standpoint, when, as a matter of fact, they to-day hold the balance of power in western Asia and form the most potentially powerful element in the world of Islam.

Though the first European went to Arabia seven hundred years before the birth of Christ, in twenty-six centuries he has gotten less than a dozen miles inland. The only spot on the entire seaboard of the great peninsula where the white man has succeeded in maintaining a foothold is Aden, to whose sun-scorched rocks a British garrison clings by the grace of God and the guns of the British fleet. The Arab has not needed forts, or a navy, to stop the white man. He has had three allies: the harborless, surf-pounded coast, the desert, and the sun. Particularly the sun. The brown man draws over his head a thin fold of cotton, and the sun let him pass. The white man covers *his* head with an inch of cork, and the sun strikes through it and kills him. What threat could be offered by a European army to a people habituated to a climate where the mercury frequently rises to 130 (and no shade!) and has been known to drop seventy degrees in half an hour; who can live for days on a handful of dried dates and a bowl of camel's milk; whose tented cities can vanish in an hour; whose swift dromedaries, when pressed, can cover four-score miles a day; and who are convinced that the surest way of gaining paradise is to die in battle with the unbeliever? It is one of the mercies of history that the Arab in the long run has always failed in organization on a large scale. Had he possessed that gift, as he possesses those of courage, daring, and endurance, he might well have ruled the world, as indeed he did rule it for that brief marvelous hour when he went out to conquer the earth for Allah.

From time beyond reckoning Arabia has been one of the world's great cross-roads, for "the Island-of-the-Arabs," as the native geographers call their land, isolated as it is by the sea on three sides and the desert on the fourth, is set where the streams of life of three continents meet. Yet at the same time it forms a mighty barrier between the lands that fringe the Mediterranean and the countries of the Middle East. Though across its orange wastes lies the short cut to the rich markets of Mesopotamia, Persia, and India, it is still traversed only by plodding caravans. The importance of this, the shortest route between West and East, has not escaped the British, however, who, I am reliably informed, are making plans for a railway and pipe-line from Baghdad straight across the desert, as the airplane flies, to Haifa, the port which they are rapidly developing on the coast of Palestine. When this scheme, which presents few engineering difficulties, becomes a fact, the journey from Cairo to Baghdad, which now takes three weeks by sea, can be made in that number of days, and, what is vastly more important, British war-ships and tankers will be able to take on Mesopotamian oil without leaving the Mediterranean. The chief stumbling-block at present to the realization of this ambitious plan is to be found in the hostility of the Arabs, but it is to be assumed that this eventually will be overcome, just as we overcame the hostility of the Indians when we laid the railways across our own deserts three-score years ago. So, in a much nearer future, I imagine, than most people suppose, the grunt of the camel will be drowned by the shriek of the locomotive, and the winding trade-routes across the desert, worn by generations of patient, plodding feet, will be replaced by twin lines of shining steel.

Arabia, it should be understood, is not a political entity. It is the name applied to that great rectangular peninsula, forming the southwestern corner of the continent of Asia, which is bounded on the north by the mandated territories of 'Iraq and Syria, on the west by Palestine and the Red Sea, on the south by the Indian Ocean, and on the east by the Gulf of Oman and the Persian Gulf.

This vast territory, equal in area to all that portion of the United States lying east of the Mississippi, consists of a fringe of Arab states having more or less firmly established governments and more or less definite boundaries surrounding a barren and inhospitable region of mountain, steppe, and desert which, though controlled by a confederation of nomadic tribes, has no political boundaries and no government at all.

The independent Arab states are eight in number: Kerak, or, as it is more commonly called, Transjordania, Hedjaz, Asir, Yemen, Oman, Koweit, Jebel Shammar, and the Emirate of Nejd and Haza. The independence of the first six is purely nominal, however, for they are, one and all, under the thumb of Great Britain, but the powerful emirs of Nejd and Jebel Shammar have successfully resisted foreign domination.

To the east of Palestine, between the Jordan and the Syrian Desert, is Kerak (Transjordania), the last of the litter of small states given birth to by the World War. This narrow "strip of herbage strown" was created by the British at the close of the war to serve as a buffer between Palestine and the restless Arabs of the hinterland. Its northern boundary is formed by that section of the Haifa-Damascus railway which traverses the wild Yarmuk Valley, on the west it is delimited by the

Jordan, the Dead Sea, and the Arabah, on the south its frontiers march with those of the Hedjaz, and on the eastern side it runs out in the Syrian Desert. Its ruler is the Emir Abdullah, second son of King Hussein of the Hedjaz and brother of King Feisal of 'Iraq; its capital is Amman, a town of about twelve thousand inhabitants lying nearly due east of Jerusalem on the Hedjaz Railway, that famous line, built under the auspices of Abdul Hamid, which, before the war, bore tens of thousands of pilgrims on the annual *hadj* to the Holy Places. Kerak is by no means the arid waste that its situation, at the edge of the desert, might suggest, for wheat from the Hauran is exported to Palestine and Syria, wood from the valleys of Moab and Gilead is burned in Jerusalem, and the products of the herds and flocks of its semi-nomadic inhabitants help to feed the peoples along the littoral. It has countless historic associations, too, for there is the country of the Ammonites, whither David sent Uriah; there is the land of Moab, whose warlike inhabitants long defied the Jews—just as their descendants are doing to-day—and its capital, Amman, was the Philadelphia of the Ptolemies. It is one of a chain of Arab buffer-states which have been forged by British diplomacy and British gold in order to restrain the powerful and ambitious Ibn

Sa'ud, sultan of Nejd and imam of the Wahhabis. To the west of the Nejd rules Hussein, king, by the grace of Britain, of the Hedjaz; to the northwest Abdullah, emir of Kerak; to the north and east Feisal, whom England set on the throne of 'Iraq. There you have the explanation of why Ibn Sa'ud, while accepting British subsidies with one hand, signs secret treaties with the French with the other. British gold fighting French gold. British intrigue matching French intrigue. A game both cunning and dangerous.

Kerak is an interesting experiment in Arab self-government. The emir has a cabinet of Syrians and Palestinians, some of them refugees from French justice, headed by his grand vizier, Riza Pasha. He also has an extremely able and tactful British adviser, Mr. Philby, who is said to know the Arabs better than any other European. The emir, who makes frequent visits to England and is rapidly adopting European ideas, has opened elementary schools in Amman, Es Salt, and others of the larger towns. Taxes are collected in the same manner as in Palestine. There is a native gendarmerie, reinforced by a small British force, and the roads are tolerably safe. The Hedjaz Railway, which was put out of commission by the war, is operating in Transjordania and paying expenses, there being a biweekly service, if I remember rightly, between Annam and Damascus. Jerusalem, which can be seen from the Transjordanian capital on a clear day, is connected with it by a moderately good motor road and by means of telegraph lines owned and operated by the emir's government. Amman is also a port of call for the planes which maintain a bimonthly service between Cairo and Baghdad. But Transjordania is not a reassuring neighbor for Palestine. Created as a protection, it has become a menace, for its fierce tribesmen view with deep resentment the Jewish plans for obtaining political control of Palestine, four fifths of whose inhabitants are of their race and faith, and they would need but little provocation to sweep down to the support of their coreligionists west of the Jordan. Indeed, they probably would have done that very thing long since had it not been for the restraining hand of Britain.

South of Palestine, stretching for upward of a thousand miles along the Red Sea shore, is the kingdom of the Hedjaz, whose octogenarian sovereign, King Hussein, exercises considerable spiritual influence in the world of Islam by virtue of being the grand sherif of Mecca. Then come the principate of Asir and the imamate of Yemen, and, at the southwestern extremity of the peninsula, the British stronghold and protectorate of

Aden. The southwestern corner of Arabia is occupied by the extensive territories of the sultan of Oman, whose capital is Maskat, and adjacent to them on the north, occupying the entire western shore of the Persian Gulf, is the territory ruled by the sheikh of Koweit.

This chain of emirates, sultanates, and kingdoms, together with the mandated territories of Syria and 'Iraq, forms a political barrier, as it were, about the real Arabia, which is occupied by numerous nomadic tribes, great and small, which form what is to all intents and purposes an Arab confederation. Of the rulers of these various inland tribes two are of outstanding power and importance: Ibn Sa'ud, sultan of Nejd and Hasa, and Ibn Rashid, emir of Jebel Shammar, who may be said to rule Inner Arabia between them. The capital of Ibn Sa'ud, most formidable of all the Arab chieftains, is at Riyadh, whence the Sa'ud dynasty exercises jurisdiction over the whole of south-central Arabia, and whence Ibn Sa'ud carries on an intermittent warfare with his redoubtable rival, Ibn Rashid of Jebel Shammar, whose government is centred at Hail. The emirates of Nejd and Jebel Shammar occupy a mountainous plateau in the very heart of the peninsula. Mountain ranges of considerable height shut them off from the sea on the east and west; to the north stretches the waterless desert of red sand known as the Nefuds, while to the south is another sun-scorched waste, the Roba el Khali. Here, hemmed in on all sides by mountains or deserts, is the cradle of the Arab race, whence sprang that remarkable people who, sword in one hand and Koran in the other, carried their civilization and their faith from India to Spain.

The political history of these Arab states presents a continuous scene of war and bloodshed, accompanied by an interminable series of intestine dissensions, intrigues, and assassinations. If grazing is the vocation of the nomad Arab, war is his avocation, the occasion usually being some quarrel about wells or pastures, while blood feuds, or the law of retaliation, cause many complications. For thousands of years there has been constant hostility not only between the various nomadic tribes themselves but between them and the sedentary inhabitants of the Fringe, it requiring the utmost efforts of the British and the French, as it did of the Turks before them, to protect the peasantry of the sown from the depredations and extortions of the desert-dwellers.

Owing to its isolation and inaccessibility, for the crossing of the Nefuds is fraught with such peril that only a handful of Europeans have attempted it, Nejd has always been able to maintain its independence. Not only that, but, in the beginning of the last century, its ruler startled the Moslem world by seizing the holy cities of Mecca and Medina and founding the Wahhabi kingdom, which is to-day the most powerful single influence in Arabia, and, perhaps, in all Islam. The Wahhabis might be described as the Puritans of the Moslem world, for, founded in the desire to re-establish the teachings of the Koran in their original austerity and purity, the sect bears much the same relation to Mohammedanism that the Puritans bore to Christianity. The Wahhabis are so stout a bulwark of religious puritanism that they have "proctors" to insure that the tenets of the sect are rigidly observed, that such rules as that forbidding smoking are scrupulously obeyed, and to see to it that the mosques remain without ornamentation, for the minarets, colored tiles, costly rugs, and mural decorations which characterize the mosques in other Moslem countries are anathema to the Wahhabis, who regard any embellishment of their praying-places as the work of Satan. So strictly are these rules observed that Wahhabis crossing the desert during the fasting month of Ramazan refrain from eating, drinking, and, in some cases, from swallowing their own saliva, between the rising and the setting of the sun, and this despite the fact that the Koran specifically exempts from these penances those engaged on a journey. The Wahhabis who accompanied our caravan across the Hamad steadfastly declined my proffered water-bottle even when the mercury stood at an incredible figure and their swollen tongues were hanging from their mouths.

The rise and decline of the Wahhabi kingdom forms one of the most picturesque and interesting chapters in Arab history. In 1817 Wahhabiland was occupied by a Turco-Egyptian army which remained in possession of the country for a quarter of a century. With its withdrawal there began a series of struggles between rival pretenders which ended only in 1872, when the then emir of Nejd succeeded in making himself the supreme ruler of Wahhabiland. His successor, Ibn Sa'ud, the present emir of Nejd and imam of the Wahhabi sect, is to-day the most powerful ruler in Arabia, having extended his sway eastward to the shores of the Persian Gulf when he drove the Turks out of El Hasa in 1913 and added that territory to his dominions.

The Wahhabi ruler is the deadly enemy of King Hussein of the Hedjaz, whose stewardship of Mecca and Medina, and whose unauthorized assumption of the title "King of the Arab Countries" he bitterly resents and challenges. By their support of the octogenarian Hussein, who is reported to be little better than an imbecile, and by their action in placing one of his sons, Feisal, on the throne of 'Iraq (Mesopotamia), and another, Abdullah, on that of Kerak (Transjordania), the British have aroused the antagonism, if not the open enmity, of Ibn Sa'ud. And he is not an antagonist to be taken lightly, as the British authorities well know, for he is credited with being able to place 300,000 well armed and splendidly mounted men in the field. In October, 1922, he routed his most formidable rival, Ibn Rashid, emir of Jebel Shammar, occupied Jauf, the most important oasis town in the Syrian Desert, and was marching against Transjordania when halted by the British. And it was only British intervention a year later which prevented Mecca and Medina from falling into his hands. Ibn Sa'ud possesses, moreover, the almost undivided support of the Arabs of the hinterland, who respect him as the head of the Wahhabi faith and regard him as their national champion. On the other hand, Hussein, Feisal, and Abdullah are all three regarded by the Arabs with distrust and dislike because of the belief that they are permitting themselves to be used by British diplomacy for the furtherance of British imperialism in Arabia. In order to secure the neutrality, if not the loyalty, of Ibn Sa'ud, the British Government pays him an annual subsidy of sixty thousand pounds, though it is common gossip in official circles in Baghdad and Damascus that the neutrality thus dearly purchased has been seriously undermined by a secret treaty which he is reported to have made with the French. Think not that there is no politics in the desert!

Paralleling the three seaboards of the Arabian peninsula are mountain ranges which in places rise to a height of several thousand feet. Within the barrier thus formed is a table-land of burning sands, studded with oases that are linked together by tenuous caravan routes. From the mountainous southern corners of the peninsula bordering the Red Sea and the Gulf of Oman, this whole table-land slopes gently downward to the Syrian Desert and the low-lying plains of the Euphrates and the Tigris. Of the million or more square miles which lie between the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf, fully a third consists only of vast solitudes of black gravel and red sand. The greater part of the Nefud, or Northern Sand-belt, which separates Arabia proper from the Syrian Desert, and the whole of the Ruba el-Khali, or great Southern Desert of soft sand, are quite uninhabitable, though at certain seasons they supply sufficiently good grazing to attract those nomadic tribes which are for ever moving up and down the land with their sheep and camels in endless search for the scanty grasses.

There are, however, certain favored districts, some inland like the fertile folds about Medina in the west; others on the fringes of the south between the mountains and the sea, the chief of which are Oman, the Yemen, and the highlands of Asir. There settled life can be supported with the hoe and plow, not only along the narrow coastal plains but on the slopes of the mountains, which are terraced with shelves of earth buttressed by thick walls of masonry, like those on the hillsides behind Sorrento. The Yemen is, thanks to its numerous mountain streams, a really fertile country, great tracts in the highlands being devoted to the cultivation of cereals and coffee, of which latter product, by the way, it is the original habitat. The coffee of the Yemen now goes out more by Aden than Hodeida, while Mocha no longer counts. In the dawn of history the Yemen was even more fertile than it is now, and from there, as from Oman and the Hedjaz, a vast traffic in spices, dates, and other merchandise was carried on with the outer world. These districts, whence came that beautiful Arab, the Queen of Sheba, are the "Arabia Felix" of the ancients;

but they are by no means typical of the peninsula as a whole.

Though Arabia has been a prolific mother, she has also been a poverty-stricken one and never has been able to support her children. As a result, they have, all down the ages, drifted in an unceasing stream of humanity down that barren, sloping table-land, either to the fertile valleys of the Tigris and the Euphrates, or northward to the vine-clad, olive-covered hills of Syria, or across the Sinai Peninsula to the corn-fields of the Nile and beyond. For forty centuries or more the Arab, breaking home ties, has wandered far into Asia and Africa, mingling with the Turk, the Jew, the Greek, the Indian, the Chinese, and the African, so that to-day we find him all the way from the Himalayas to Gibraltar, from the Bosphorus down to Zanzibar. He has intermarried with most of these people, yet he has throughout kept his racial identity unbroken and essentially without alloy. Though often beaten in battle, he has never been conquered, having remained to this day independent and untamed. Prohibited by the appalling poverty of his own country from becoming a producer, the Arab—with the aid of his unique possession, the camel—has been the immemorial carrier between East and West. A shrewd and successful trader, he is the middleman of the three continents, the three great cities of the Arab world, Damascus, Baghdad, and Cairo, being all beyond the frontier of Arabia itself. As a missionary he is without an equal, having during the last half-century brought vast areas of the Dark Continent under the shadow of the Crescent. He is, by the sheer fact of his wanderings and his religious zeal, daily widening the sway of Islam, it being estimated that more than 230 millions of people to-day accept the teachings of the Koran.

The Arabs, generally speaking, may be divided into two great classes: "the people of the tent," and "the people of the wall," as the city-dwellers are called. Annually the desert sheikh will send his many hundreds of camels to the metropolis for sale, while many scores of camels will come back laden with the cottons, the cutlery, and the firearms that he and his tribe will need through the year. It is this intercommunication between the desert folk and their brethren of the towns that makes the Arab world, and through these periodic meetings between the sheikhs and the city merchants Arab politics is shaped.[1]

Between "the people of the tent" and "the

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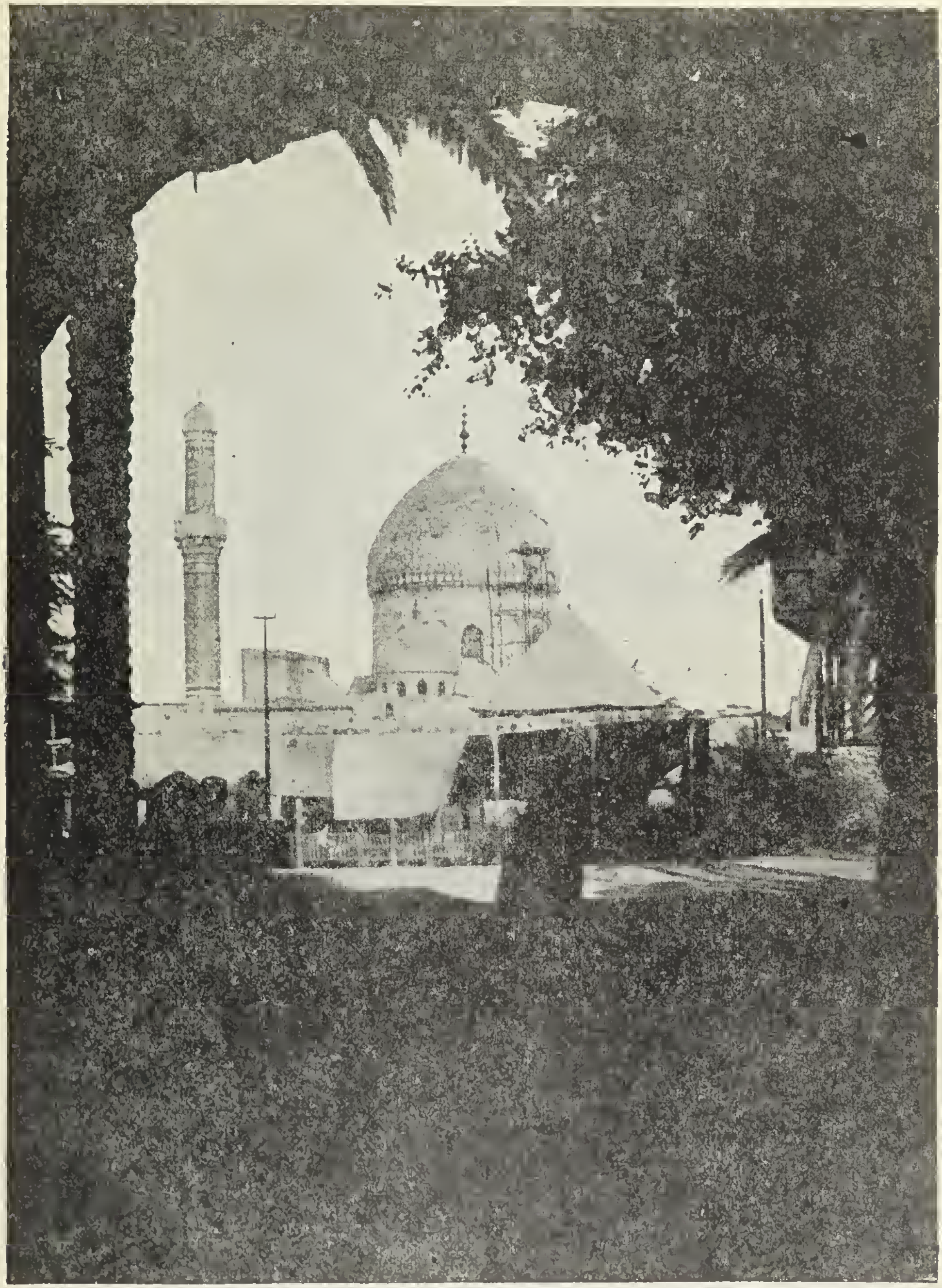
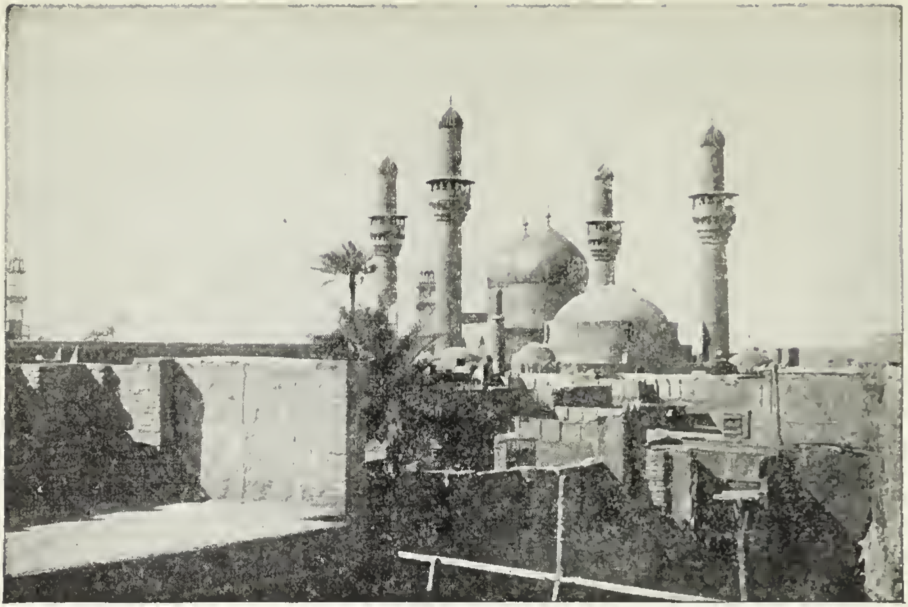
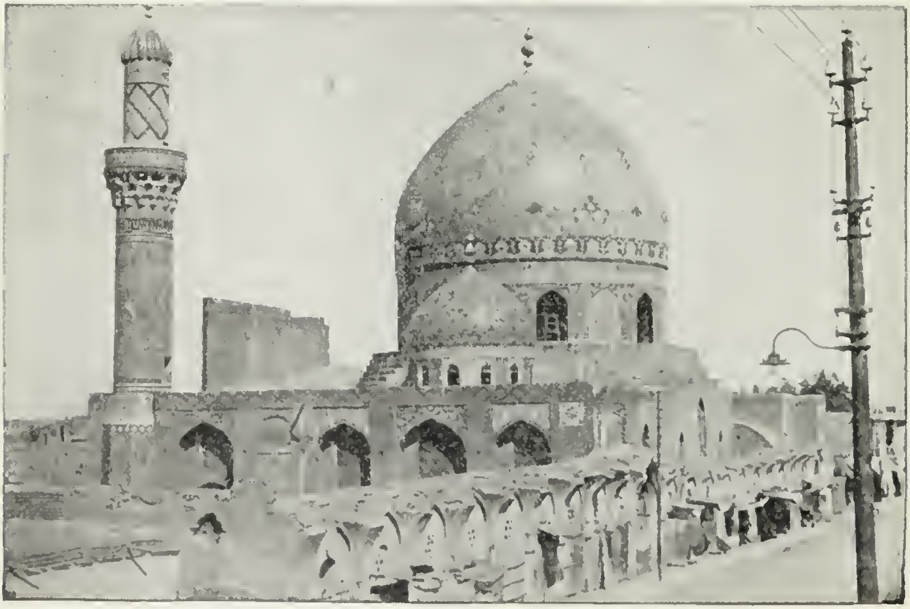
[1] See "The Riddle of Nearer Asia," by Basil Mathews.



Seen from a distance, Baghdad is very beautiful, with its peacock-colored mosques and minarets framed by the lofty date-palms, but the moment one sets foot within the city, and sees the narrow, filthy streets and the miserable houses of crumbling mud, the illusion vanishes.



The mosque of Kazemain, in the outskirts of Baghdad. Its two great domes, the five lofty minarets, and part of the façade are overlaid with gold, the gift of Shab Nasr-ed-Din of Persia, at a cost, it is said, of a pound for every brick.



The mosque of Haider Khané in Baghdad. Its splendid domes and minaret are covered with glazed tiles of blue and green and yellow, laid in charming arabesque patterns.

people of the wall'' are several other gradations of Arab life.

In the cities and villages of the Fringe are ''town Arabs,'' denationalized, degenerate, and corrupted by their environment. Ignorant and untrustworthy, they have neither the simplicity and sturdy independence of the desert folk nor the cultivation and courtesy of the civilized Arab.

In the oasis towns of the interior—Jauf, Riyadh, Hail, and the rest—are settled communities, dwelling in substantially built houses, of purer blood and having greater intelligence and self-respect than the ''town Arabs'' of the Fringe. In their remote and solitary settlements, surrounded both by burning deserts and by the invisible but equally impassable barrier of their faith, they form one of the most secluded peoples in the world.

And in the edges of the settled districts is found a kind of Gipsy Arab, half sedentary, half nomadic, who live in tents but cultivate the soil. These tribal communities, while admitting the loose overlordship of the greater emirs, such as Ibn Sa'ud, give effective allegiance only to their own sheikhs.

The term ''Bedouin'' (the native name is ''Bedawi,'' plural ''Beddu'') is used by the nomadic tribes to distinguish themselves from the sedentary or "town Arabs" and the semi-sedentary Arabs engaged in agriculture, known as *fellaheen*, the last two classes being given the general name of "Hadari." The Bedouins are divided into tribes, the tribes into subtribes, and the subtribes into families, each of these groups being presided over by a sheikh corresponding to the patriarchs of the Scriptures, whose authority, however, is more or less limited by the jealousy of his clansmen. However numerous the members of these families may be, or however far they may stray from the home-land, they never lose their connection with the parent stock, this connection being maintained by intermarriages, frequently between first cousins, occasionally between uncles and nieces, aunts and nephews, more rarely between half-brothers and half-sisters.

Throughout all that vast region which stretches from the Jordan to the Tigris, and from the Indian Ocean to the hills of Kurdistan, are Bedouins of various tribes, who migrate according to the seasons of the year from one region to another, from their winter to their summer camping-grounds. The Bedouins migrating between the Nejd and the upper valley of the Euphrates are divided into two large and powerful tribes, the Anizeh and the Shammars. But besides these great tribes there are many small ones, such as the Wuld' Ali, the Heseneh, the Hubeisen, the Bisher, the Ruwalas, and the Sokbars. To the inexperienced European eye they all look and dress very much alike, but the Arabs can identify the tribes to which individuals belong as readily as an Englishman can recognize a Yorkshireman, a Cornishman, or a man from Devon. It is impossible to identify a given tribe with any definite locality, however, for they range over hundreds of miles, according to the season of the year, moving, for instance, from the vicinity of Nejd as far northward as Diarbekr, a distance equivalent to that from the Gulf of Mexico to the Canadian border.

About the time that the snow is beginning to disappear from the streets of American cities the annual spring exodus from central Arabia begins, the Bedouins, accompanied by their women-folk and children, their camels, horses, and sheep, move slowly northward from the Nejd, across the Hamad, or Syrian Desert, and so up the broad valley of the Euphrates until they reach the Kurdish hills. Here they spend the summer months, pitching their black tents—the same "black tents of Kedar" mentioned in the Song of Solomon—on the grassy slopes and fattening their animals on the rich pasturage which carpets the valley bottoms. The trek of one of these great tribes affords a spectacle never to be forgotten. It is a nation on the move, a migration differing in few particulars from the Exodus of the Bible. When, in the spring and summer of 1922, I crossed the desert from the Tigris to Aleppo, I encountered one of the Shamman tribes on its northward march. The low goat's-hair tents of the main encampment stretched along the sky-line for upward of seven miles—a great nomad city. Far as the eye could see the plain was dotted with grazing animals. The French military authorities at Rakka estimated that this single subtribe had with it thirty thousand sheep and fifty thousand camels and that its sheikh, Arjil, could put into the field upward of twenty thousand well armed fighting men. In the early months of autumn the southward march begins, and, by the time that our Thanksgiving comes around, the nomads are back in the Arab home-land again, where they spend the winter and then, with the coming of spring, enact the great migration all over again.

How does the Bedouin exist? Mainly on what is yielded by the camel, or, more properly, the she-camel, for she provides him with food, drink, clothing, shelter, transportation, and even fuel, for where there is no wood camel-dung is used for fires. The Bedouin baby, born in the open air behind some recumbent camel, is weaned on camel's milk, brought up on camel-flesh and camel-butter, is dressed in camel-hair fabrics, sleeps on a camel-skin under a tent of camel-cloth, and as a ten-year-old tends and rides the camel. All through his life he looks to the camel caravan to bring across the desert all the luxuries and many of the necessities of life, and, if he goes a-traveling, it must be on a camel's back. To the Arab, as Mr. Basil Mathews has truly said, the camel is all and more than all that the cow and the sheep and the horse, the flax and the cotton plant, bricks and mortar and concrete and stone, the steamship and the railway-train are to the civilization of the West. The long hair of the camel is made into the garments with which the Bedouins clothe themselves, the carpets on which they sit, and occasionally into tents, though goat's-hair is more generally used for the latter purpose. The material is woven by the Bedouin women, and is of very close texture, almost impervious to rain. The tent is divided into two compartments, one for the women, the other for the men. During the spring months, when milk is plentiful, the milk of the camel is curdled, strained, pressed, and made into small balls, which are dried in the sun. Then, in the months when the camels are not in milk, these dried balls are crushed and stirred in water, providing a sour but sustaining beverage similar to the *yourt* of Turkey and Bulgaria. The morning meal of a Bedouin consists of a bowl of this soured milk and a handful of dried dates—nothing more. Occasionally a sheep is slaughtered, and, very rarely, a young camel, but the Bedouin seldom tastes meat save on some special occasion. From dates they make quite a palatable pudding. Those of the Bedouins who can afford it purchase from the *fellaheen* a coarse barley flour which they use for bread, the loaves, which are in the form of enormous pancakes, eighteen inches across and a quarter of an inch thick, having the toughness of sole-leather. A strip of bread is torn from the loaf and twisted into a sort of cornucopia, which is stuffed with date-pudding, much as ice-cream is put into a cone, the whole being washed down with a draft of camel's milk. Nutritious, yes, but, to a European. scarcely appetizing. The locusts, though a plague to the *fellaheen,* are a blessing to the Bedouin, who roasts their hind legs and wings over the coals and considers them a great delicacy. In order to provide against the lean winter months, when food of every sort is scarce, he lays in great stores of the grasshopper-like insect, which he dries and grinds, the pasty flour thus produced being baked into a wretched substitute for bread. The horses are also fed with this locust flour, which, the Bedouins assert, is twice as nourishing as the same amount of barley. Curiously enough the horses could not exist were it not for the locust and the camel, for on long desert marches, when the wells are few and far between, the mares and colts are fed twice daily on camel's milk. One of the Bedouin's finest qualities, indeed, is his affection for his horse. When food is scarce, it is always the Bedouin who goes hungry.[1]

Among certain of the nomad tribes which I encountered I found, to my surprise, that tea was the principal drink, coffee being used very much as we were wont to use liqueurs before prohibition came in. The coffee, which is always made from freshly roasted berries brought from the Yemen, is seasoned with a seed which gives it a peculiar aromatic flavor, and is served, without sugar, in small cups, scarcely larger than a thimble, it being customary, particularly on occasions of ceremony, for the coffee-pot to make the round of the circle three times. Only half a cup is served at a time, for, were it to be filled, the guest might interpret it as a hint that he was expected to take his departure. Which reminds me that Abbas Hilmi, the former khedive of Egypt, was wont to intimate to his visitors how long he expected them to remain by what he offered them to smoke, a cigarette implying a brief visit and a cigar a longer one. Among the Arabs, as with the Turks, the right hand is considered "clean" and the left hand "unclean," it being considered the grossest discourtesy to return a salute or to offer food or drink with the latter.

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[1] See "Life in the Moslem East," by Pierre Pontafadine.

The sheikhs of the great tribes are frequently rich men, the subsidies which they receive from the British and French Governments, the tolls which they levy on travelers passing through their territory, and the income which they derive from the sale of horses, camels, and sheep, to say nothing of the profits produced by successful raids, often running into many thousands of pounds. The customary toll levied on travelers or caravans is ten Turkish gold liras (about fifty dollars) per person. French and British officials with whom I talked estimated the wealth of Ibn Rashid of the Shammars, for example, at from two to five million dollars. This great sum (which is entirely in gold, for your Bedouin puts no faith in any form of paper currency) he will not intrust to a bank—indeed, he never enters a city—but carries it with him wherever he goes in American-made steel safes lashed to the backs of camels. Ibn Sa'ud is credited with being even richer than his great rival, but he keeps his wealth in his treasure-house at Nejd.

About the "ship of the desert," as the camel has been poetically called, a vast amount of nonsense has been written, as, for example, that it can go for two and even three weeks without water. Ghazi Mansour, the leader of our caravan across the Hamad, told me that during the cool season, when there is plenty of grass, a camel can travel for a week, or, at the outside, for ten days, without water, but that during the hot months it must be watered every three or four days. It should also be understood that there are almost as many breeds of camels as there are of horses, and that there is as much difference between a *djemal mai,* or draft-animal, and a *hejin,* or racing dromedary, as there is between a Percheron and a thoroughbred. The camels made familiar to Americans by the circus are almost invariably of the former breed and usually poor specimens at that. Even in Cairo and Damascus the racing camels are rarely seen, for the desert sheikhs seldom let the really fine animals pass from their possession. The Syrian camel is the greatest weight-carrier, being able to cover seventy miles in twenty-four hours with a load of five hundred pounds. The carefully bred *hejin* which is raised in central and southern Arabia and is usually a small animal, white, fawn, or gray in color, can if pressed, make ninety and even one hundred miles in twenty-four hours and on long journeys has been known to travel five hundred miles in six days. Before Cairo was connected with the coast by railway, the express-riders of the Khedive Ismail were wont to start with the European mails upon the arrival of a steamer at Alexandria and deliver them twenty-four hours later at the Abdin Palace in Cairo, 110 miles away.

Arabia is crisscrossed by caravan routes which traverse it in all directions, for every yard of cloth, every case of cartridges, every box of matches used in the interior towns of the peninsula and along the upper reaches of the Tigris and the Euphrates reach them on the backs of camels. A recognized freight and passenger tariff is in force, as on American railways, the charge for transporting merchandise from Damascus to Baghdad, for example, being about forty cents a pound, and about seventy-five dollars each for passengers. A caravan may consist of anywhere from a score to several hundred camels. The larger it is, of course, the better it is able to defend itself against attack, and, by the same token, the greater temptation it offers to Bedouin raiding-parties. In order to facilitate this desert traffic there has long been in existence the *rafiq,* or safe-conduct, system. Each tribe, it should be understood, has a recognized *dira,* or range, within which it is supreme, and, in passing from the *dira* of one tribe to that of another, a *rafiq* is absolutely necessary to insure the caravan's safety. A further measure of precaution is provided by the employment of the *'Uqeil,* or professional caravan leaders, who are generally permitted to pass by all tribes and are thus able to conduct caravans with more or less security. They are usually chosen from the tribesmen of central Arabia or the Hauran, care being taken to exclude from the gild members of the more powerful tribes, such as the Shammars and the Anizeh, and those which have blood feuds, so as to preserve the neutral character of the system. Thus it will be seen that, just as the caravan is to the East what the railway is to the West, so the *'Uqeil* correspond, in some measure, at least, to our railway brotherhoods and unions. And, I might add, a caravan conducted by a leader who is not a member of this desert fraternity has about as much chance of reaching its destination without molestation as would a train operated by a non-union crew.

The leader of a caravan is confronted by much the same problems, difficulties, and dangers which were encountered by the freighters who crossed our own plains in frontier days. His merchandise, it is true, is borne on the backs of camels instead of being hauled by oxen; the women-folk ride in hooded litters instead of prairie-schooners; he is in danger of attack by Bedouins instead of Indians. But the weary journey is made at the same two-and-a-half-miles-an-hour gait; there is the same oven-like heat and the same torrential rains, the same suffocating dust, the same deadly monotony of hot blue sky and hot orange desert, the same tantalizing mirages, the same scarcity of food and pasturage and water. Particularly of water, for, whereas the American plainsman encountered frequent lakes and streams, the miserable desert wells on which the Arab must depend are frequently a week's journey apart, and, during the hot season, are often found to be dry.

Owing to the difficulty of keeping the camels from straying in the darkness, caravans travel by night comparatively seldom. The start is usually made at four in the morning, just as dawn is breaking, the march continuing without a break until nightfall, for, in a region where the thermometer frequently registers 130 and even 135, tents afford scant protection from the sun and there is little to be gained by a halt at midday. When the caravan is in Bedouin country all military precautions are rigidly observed, two or three men riding well ahead of the column as an advance-guard while others are thrown out as skirmishers on either flank. A few hundred yards in advance of the main body rides the caravan leader, mounted on a swift *hejin;* then come the passengers, if there are any, the women and children in hooded litters, two to a camel, which look like chicken-coops with canvas roofs. When the caravan halts for the night these litters are removed from the camels and placed in a group, blankets or matting being hung between them, thus affording some measure of privacy for the women. In their wake stalks the long train of baggage-camels, heavy, ponderous, slow-moving beasts, each carrying its five-hundred-pound burden sewed up in burlap-covered bales. The maximum weight for a camel, I might mention in passing, is about 520 pounds, and the Arabs assert that, if that weight is even slightly exceeded, the camel will refuse to rise. Water is carried in skins, each containing about thirty gallon, slung under the animals' bellies. Last of all is another small group of Arabs, who serve as a rear-guard and round up any animals that attempt to lag or stray. Once the dangerous country is entered, cartridge-stuffed bandoliers, far in excess of the number authorized by the French and British military authorities, are produced from ingenious hiding places and thenceforward, until the patrols of the 'Iraq Camel Corps or the French *méharistes* are sighted, every man goes armed.

The site chosen for the night's camp is usually a *wadi,* or shallow valley, so that the presence of the caravan may not be betrayed to roaming Bedouins by its camp-fires. The bales of merchandise are unloaded from the grumbling camels (though the pack-saddles are not removed) and arranged so as to form a *zariba,* or hollow square, which affords admirable protection in case of attack. As soon as the goat's-hair tents have been pitched, and the fires of camel's dung have been started, the animals, in charge of herdsmen, are driven off to graze, for, save in the height of summer, pasturage of sorts can usually be found in the desert, the camel growing fat where a horse or cow would starve. As soon as darkness sets in they are brought back and hobbled in a long line without the walls of the *zariba,* rifles are examined and placed in readiness for instant use, sentries are posted along the *wadi's* rim, and the resting caravan takes on all the aspects of a military bivouac. I might add that even in the march at least three of the five daily prayers prescribed for the faithful are rigidly observed, at daybreak, at midday, and again at nightfall, the men of the party, led by one of their own number, who may or may not be a *mullah,* forming in line, their faces turned toward the Kaaba, and performing the interminable series of prayers and prostrations required from the followers of the Prophet. The duty of washing before prayer is a sanitary institution, and strictly enjoined by the Koran, tanks being provided for the purpose in the court of every Moslem place of worship. In the desert, however, where even drinking-water is very scarce, the faithful are permitted to use sand for this religious ablution.

The free-born, foot-loose son of the desert, flying across the sands on his Arab steed, has long held captive the imagination of the West, whose writers and poets have idealized him. As a matter of fact, however, the Bedouin is very far from the chivalrous, high-principled, tender-hearted hero of the popular novel and the silver screen. The poets sing of Bedouin hospitality. Yet his hospitality is, when all is said and done, largely a matter of give and take. He gives food and shelter to travelers because he expects, when he is traveling, that others will give food and shelter to him. Hospitality is a custom of the desert, and its limits are, moreover, definitely defined. And the number of days that the stranger has a right to demand hospitality is as definitely limited as the period that a friend of a member may enjoy the privileges of a club. The oft-quoted assertion that the Bedouin never molests one with whom he has once broken bread brings a cynical smile to the lips of those who know the desert. It is true that he will not kill or rob a stranger while beneath his tent, but he will not hesitate to do so once the stranger has left his camp. He tells the truth only when it suits his purpose to do so. In his treatment of women he is as chivalrous as the American Indian. ''What we cannot eat ourselves we give to the women,'' is one of his sayings; ''the women can eat anything.'' In numbering population women are not counted. Divorce is common among the Bedouins, but, on the other hand, polygamy is far more common in the towns than among the tents. His women-folk, when young and beautiful, the Arab treats as playthings, when old as drudges, the men taking little part in the labor of the camp save the care of the camels. Morals, as we know the term, he has none. Yet, though almost universally sensuous, the Arab of the desert is a clean-living man compared with his brethren of the towns, particularly the inhabitants of Mecca and Medina, who wallow in unspeakable beastliness at the very doors of the most sacred shrines of their faith. Robbery, in Arab eyes, is not only legitimate but commendable, demanding, as it does, qualities which prompt to difficult and dangerous exploits. For in his prehensile activities he is always a Robin Hood, a Dick Turpin, never a sneak-thief or a burglar. The law of "an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth" is graven deep on the Arab code of honor, which, in retaliation for the taking of life, enjoins interminable strife between families, clans, and tribes that passes on from generation to generation, this system of revenge being as universal throughout Arabia as the vendetta in Corsica and the blood feud in Kentucky though the desert murderer can usually purchase immunity from punishment by the payment of "blood-money" to the family of his victim. Most Arabs are completely illiterate. Indeed, there is no evidence that the Meccan camel-driver who founded the great faith that bears his name could read or write a word. From time beyond reckoning the wisdom of the ages has been handed down from father to son as they sit cross-legged before their black tents in the desert where the dung-fed camp-fire curls. In his cruelty, and his ingenuity in devising tortures, the Bedouin rivals the Apache. The political agent at Ramadie, on the Euphrates, told me of a British officer, captured by hostile Bedouins, whom they had literally cut into small pieces with their knives. The things which they have done to French soldiers who have fallen into their hands would not bear repetition here. Many of their personal habits are disgusting. I have been told that in certain tribes, when a Bedouin wishes fat with his meal, he cuts it with his knife from the tail of a living sheep and eats it without cooking. I myself saw two Bedouins, who joined our caravan near El Garah, loosen their hair, which they wore in long braids, schoolgirl fashion, and shampoo it with rotten eggs whipped up in camel's urine.

Yet the Bedouin has many fine qualities withal. He is courageous, abstemious, thoughtful, courteous, patient, religious in that he faithfully observes the teachings of the Koran, generally honest in financial matters, unwaveringly faithful to a trust; and, once his word is given, he never breaks it. Mean and haggling beyond description in his commercial dealings, he will stick to a bargain, no matter how unprofitable it may prove, once he has made it, and he is often lavishly generous toward those whom he looks on as his friends. His arrogant pride, distrustfulness, and readiness to quarrel are balanced by innate courtesy and great patience, and are lifted high by his personal courage, his uncomplaining endurance of hardships and privations, and his great patience. His nearest counterpart in these respects is, perhaps, the old-time Indian of our Western plains, whom he equals, if not surpasses, in virility and physique. Nothing would be farther from the truth, however, than to interpret the Arab's simplicity as crudeness, to assume that his illiteracy spells unintelligence, or that he is deficient in business ability, imagination, dignity, or political acumen.

Because of their poverty, polygamy is rarer, as I have already remarked, among the nomads than among the Arabs of the towns, it usually being only the sheikhs who can afford to support more than one wife. Though the husband can divorce his wife at will upon repayment of the marriage settlement, it is almost impossible for the wife, under the Koranic law, to obtain a divorce under any circumstances. In case of ill-treatment, however, she can take refuge with relatives or friends and her husband cannot molest her, the quarrel usually being patched up by emissaries representing both parties. The veil and the harem of Islam seclude the Arab women of the towns, but in the tent-life of the desert they are far freer. But in both they are developed sensually while retarded mentally and socially; their horizon of ideas is limited; their position is one of inferiority and subjection.[1] Woman, as Mr. Mathews has remarked, is the wounded wing of Arab life—a permanent drag on the progress of the race.

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[1] See "The Riddle of Nearer Asia," by Basil Mathews.

What is the future of the Arabs? Will they eventually establish a confederation, a great Arab empire, stretching from the Kurdish mountains to the shores of the Indian Ocean, from the Mediterranean to Persia? Or will France and England block this scheme by continuing to cling to their mandates in Syria and Mesopotamia and Palestine against the Arabs' will? Will the white man attempt to conquer and civilize and develop Arabia, as we conquered and civilized and developed the West, with the rifle, the railway, and the plow, or will he fall back upon the coast towns, leaving the vast interior of the country in undisputed possession of its half-savage, nomadic tribes? Will Arabia remain a barrier eventually to be smashed, as all barriers are smashed which obstruct the march of progress, or, abandoning their age-old isolation, will the Arabs gradually respond to the influence of the West? Will the Orient and the Occident meet across her in battle only, as they did in the days of the Crusades, or in the friendly intercourse of trade? Could we know what is going on behind the scenes in Downing Street and at the Quai d'Orsay, in Constantinople, Angora, and Cairo, where British, French, and Turkish policies are blocking each other and where their jealousies and distrusts are blocking all progress in western Asia, it would be easier to find the answers to these questions. For it is the imperialism of England and France, and the jealousy and suspicion existing between those powers, combined with Turkish intrigues and ambitions, which are directly responsible for the dangerous unrest that exists among the Arabs today. But nothing is more certain than that Arabia is the stage on which will be enacted, sooner or later, one of the greatest dramas in the history of mankind. And in that drama the Arabs themselves may be depended upon to play no minor part.

CHAPTER V

"WE FOLLOW AND FOLLOW THE JOURNEYING SUN"

THE routine of a caravan on the march is as changeless as the desert itself. Awakened by Achmet at three o'clock in the morning, we would crawl shivering from our blankets to dress in darkness and bitter cold. And the cold of early morning in the Hamad pierces one to the bone. By the time that Sherin had the Primus stoves going and had prepared breakfast, which consisted of tea (usually with a dash of rum), hard biscuits or the leathery Arab bread, scrambled eggs, and tinned sausages, the tent had been struck and, with our bedding and other camp equipment, packed on the camels. At four o'clock, just as the eastern sky was graying, Ghazi Mansour would mount his white *hejin,* and the march began.

We made it a practice to walk for the first three or four hours, thus varying the monotony and sufficiently tiring ourselves so that the long hours in the saddle were more easily endured. These pedestrian interludes in the cool fragrance of the early dawn were the pleasantest part of the day, for, save where the desert was strewn with flint-like volcanic rock, the walking was good and we could step out briskly—so briskly, in fact, that we usually kept well in advance of the main body of the caravan, for a draft-camel, unless pushed seldom averages more than two and a half miles an hour. With pipes alight we would stride along as though out for a tramp in the country, discussing politics, science, literature, art, religion (the latter, for some reason, was always a favorite topic), anything, in fact, which served to while the hours away. But, as the day advanced, it grew too hot for walking, and by eight o'clock we were usually glad to take to our saddles again. I am convinced that the camel-saddle was originally designed by a graduate of the Spanish Inquisition, for, of all the instruments of torture with which I am familiar, it has no equal. The seat, which is too broad to fit the anatomy of a European, is not unlike that of one of our Western stock-saddles, but it has no stirrups or other support for the rider's feet, and, instead of a pommel and cantle, it has two sticks, each about a foot in length and the size of a broom-handle, rising fore and aft. The sole function of these sticks, so far as I could see, was to punch me in the pit of the stomach as I was jerked forward and to prod me in the spine as I was hurled back.

Because of an injury to my back sustained during the war, I had not dared to depend on a camel alone and had insisted on Mohammed Bassam's providing me with a horse, the only one in the caravan, which we used between us, turn and turn about. This horse was an Arab, it is true, but it was *not* the desert steed of fiction, curved of neck and long of pastern, but a rather dejected-looking sorrel pony which suffered from constitutional laziness; so that long before the journey was over my arm was lame from beating tatoos with a stick upon its bony sides. It takes a fast-walking horse to keep up with camels, and on more than one occasion I fell so far behind that the sheikh sent to my rescue an Arab mounted on a fast *hejin*. He would take a turn of my halter-rope about the stick at the front of his saddle, cluck his animal into a sort of running walk, and drag the unwilling pony along in his wake, like a tugboat towing a lighter, until we overtook the caravan.

I wish that my friends at home might have seen me when fully accoutred for the march. I looked like one of Sherman's bummers on the march to the sea, for slung across my shoulders or strapped to the saddle were my field-glasses, camera, pistol, rifle, bandolier, water-bottle, rain-coat, blankets, and a haversack bulging with odds and ends for which space could not be found elsewhere. As the heat increased, I substituted for my jacket a voluminous white *abiyeh* which I had bought in Damascus, and over my helmet draped a *keffieh,* which fell down over my shoulders, protecting my back from the sun and producing an almost imperceptible current of air. When the sun approached its zenith, I unfurled a dilapidated umbrella lent me by Fuad's mademoiselle. It was not picturesque, but it afforded considerable protection, and, in the heat of an Arabian summer, it is the part of wisdom to take no chances. Hutchings did take a chance, and was rewarded by a sunstroke that kept him in a Baghdad hospital for many days.

From our start at four in the morning until we pitched camp at sunset there was rarely a halt save occasionally about noon, when Ghazi Mansour sometimes broke the march long enough to permit the making of coffee. Nor would anything have been gained by a midday halt, as is the custom of expeditions in cooler latitudes, for there is no shade in the desert, and even had the tents been pitched, the heat beneath them would have been insufferable. Our noon meal, therefore, consisted only of tinned fruit, usually pineapple or peaches, and a handful of dried dates and figs, which we carried in our haversacks and ate as we rode.

The great caravan routes, which have been used from time beyond reckoning, are usually well defined; not a single beaten road, of course, but a number of narrow, sinuous, more or less parallel trails made by the padded feet of untold generations of camels. All day long, day in and day out, we rode across a burning, desolate waste, flatter and hotter than it is possible to imagine or describe. One could see but a few miles in any direction. The whole of our world had become a flat, brown disk, reflecting the scorching sun-rays as from a plate of copper. Though the Hamad is, for the most part, as level as a ball-room floor, one gets the impression that it is tilted and that he is forever riding uphill. The sun is pitiless, implacable, terrifying. It pursues one mercilessly, beating down upon one's head and shoulders with a vindictiveness that seems almost personal. The heat in the Hamad during the late spring and summer cannot be realized by one who has not experienced it. Fortunately, however, it is a dry heat, like that of Death Valley and the Colorado Desert, and one does not perspire. But it seems literally to shrivel one up. Every particle of moisture leaves the body until one feels like an orange that has been squeezed dry. The skin turns to blotting-paper. The lips and gums crack open. The tongue swells, and there is no saliva with which to moisten it. The eyeballs become inflamed. Any exposed portion of the body is burned as though by fire. The dust stirred up by the camels rises in suffocating yellow clouds, filling nostrils, eyes, and ears. A mighty, invisible finger seems to be pressing intolerably upon one's head and spine. The brain reels. The heat-waves dance and flicker above the unending waste. What appear to be purple storm-clouds rise and fall dizzily on the cloudless horizon. Occasionally there is a breeze, but it is so laden with heat that it is like a blast from a furnace-door. The man who says that he loves the desert at all times is either a liar or a fool. He might as well say that he loves the stoke-hole of a steamer.

The sense of solitude is overpowering. Far as the eye can see is nothing but orange waste, unbroken by any living thing over a foot high. Northward that waste stretches for half a thousand miles to the Kurdish mountains, eastward for thirteen hundred miles to the Afghan border, southward for a like distance to the shores of the Indian Ocean. You feel as though you were afloat on a deserted sea. The monotony is appalling: the unending expanse of brown and orange; the rhythmic sway of the camels, and the unhurried rise and fall of their great splay feet and long brown legs; the creak of the saddles; the smell of sweat-soaked leather; the shrill, plaintive voice of a cameleer raised in Arab song; the intolerable glare reflected from the sun-baked earth in quivering mirage; and, high overhead, the sun, a ball of molten brass suspended in a sky that looks like an inverted bowl of bluest porcelain. If you dared to look up at it, its brilliancy blinded you as though some one had flashed a mirror in your eyes.

I lived over again days spent in cleaner, greener lands, tormenting myself with mental pictures of tumbling mountain torrents in the Rockies; of New England wells brimming with fresh, cool water; of porcelain tubs in shaded bath-rooms; of ice tinkling in tall, thin, frosted glasses; of plates heaped high with ice-cream. To pass the hot and weary hours I deliberated on the dinner that I would order when we were back in civilization again: iced consommé, iced cucumbers, cold chicken, grape-fruit salad, iced coffee, and again ice-cream. For one small piece of the ice and snow which had covered the streets of New York when I left, and which I had trampled underfoot disrespectfully, I would have given all that I possessed. None of us will ever touch ice hereafter save with the same respect and consideration that we would show to a precious stone.

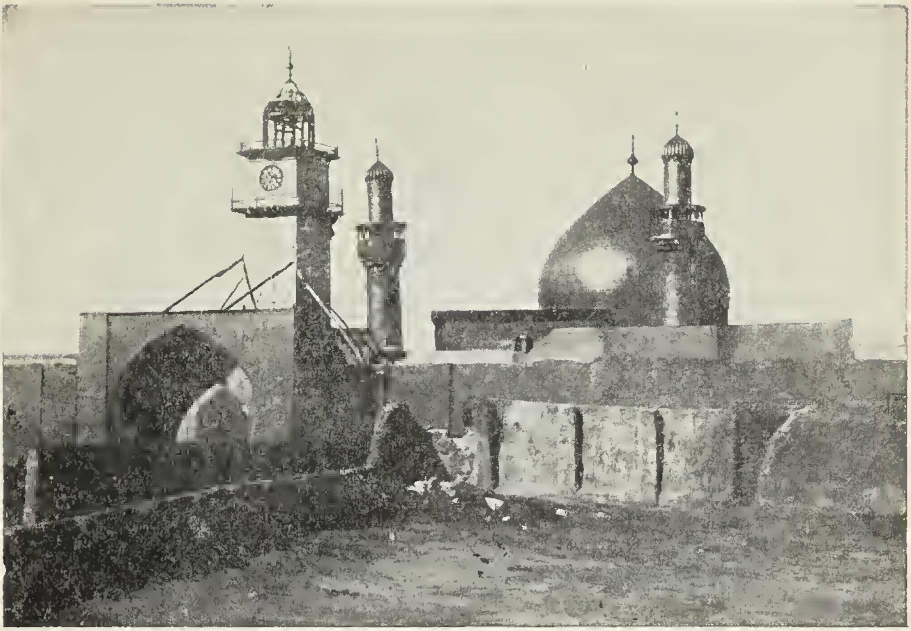
In other lands one can while away the tedium of a journey by reading, or playing cards, or making plans and dreaming dreams, but it is next to impossible to maintain a train of thought for any length of time in the desert. So, to break the monotony, Ladew sang songs, one of which had a refrain, highly suggestive under the circumstances, which ran, *"The Gipsy warned me, the Gipsy warned me";* Sherin whistled as he rode; and I recited scraps of verse, Kipling and Service usually, or hummed snatches of college-songs that had been tucked away in some pigeonhole of my mind since boyhood days. Hutchings, who was suffering from a form of sunstroke, rode in gloomy silence, bent double in his saddle to relieve his throbbing head. There was nothing that we could do for him.

There is no way that I have discovered for a European to be even moderately comfortable on a camel, whether on a saddle or in a litter. One is aware of the existence of bones in the most unexpected portions of one's anatomy, and these bones soon begin aching furiously in the unaccustomed position. After a few days, of course, one becomes inured to the novel posture and to the animal's peculiar gait; but it is never really enjoyable, at least at the walk, though some of the *hejin,* or racing-camels, have a trot almost as smooth and pleasant as the single-foot of a Kentucky thoroughbred. It should be borne in mind that, though there are only two species of camel—the single-humped Arabian dromedary and the two-humped, long-haired Bactrian of Farther Asia—there are innumerable breeds, which to the trained eye differ as greatly as different breeds of horses.

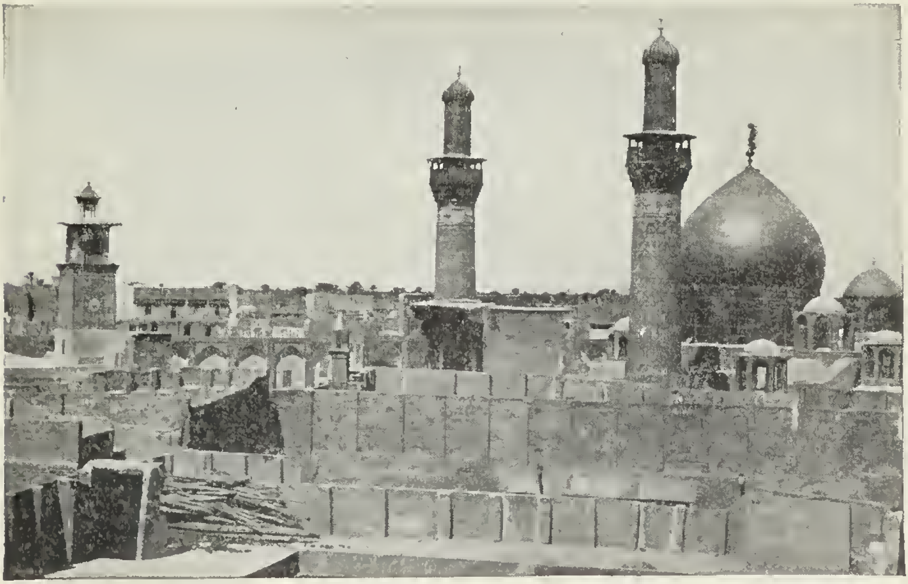
Always ride to windward of a caravan. I do not know whether it is due to the unirrigated condition of the beast's intestinal tract, the result of going for long periods without water, or to the nature of its food, but the camel has a breath which, if you catch it full in the face, will almost knock you from the saddle. The foul blast which it occasionally emits from its mouth, the yellow teeth dripping with green foam, combines the stenches of a cesspool, a decomposing carcass, and a garbage crematory. More than once I longed to give my mount a large dose of one of those cures for halitosis which are so extensively advertised in the magazines.

Circumstances over which we had no control necessitated our starting on our journey during the fasting month of Ramadan, the Lent of the Mohammedans, during which no devout Moslem eats, drinks, or smokes between sunrise and sunset. The fanatically pious, indeed, as I have remarked elsewhere, even go to the length of refraining from swallowing their own saliva. Though persons making a journey, the sick, and young children are specifically exempted from this fast, a number of the Arabs attached to our caravan belonged to the Wahhabi sect, whose rules permit of no relaxation of its observance. Consequently, these men would travel for twelve, and sometimes sixteen, hours under a scorching sun without once touching food or water. I have never seen so remarkable an example of religious self-denial. On the hottest and longest march of all, when we covered more than forty miles, little Achmet made the entire distance on foot without once moistening his tongue, which, by nightfall, was black and swollen. Though I repeatedly proffered him my water-bottle, he always shook his head in refusal with a forced but cheery smile. Even when sunset came our Arabs did not break their fast until, the tents having been pitched and the camels unloaded, watered, and turned out to graze, they had formed in line, their faces turned southward toward the Kaaba, and had gone through the interminable series of prayers and prostrations enjoined upon the faithful, including the quick glance over each shoulder, accompanied by a muttered ejaculation, which is supposed to drive away the evil spirits who always lurk behind one. It is true that we occasionally made a brief halt in the middle of the day for coffee, but I noticed that this breach of their tenets was regarded by the more devout with open disapproval. Though Ghazi Mansour never failed to take part in the prescribed prayers, I gathered that he was far from being as orthodox as the majority of his followers, while Fuad, though professing Mohammedanism, regarded these observances with the cynical tolerance of a man of the world.

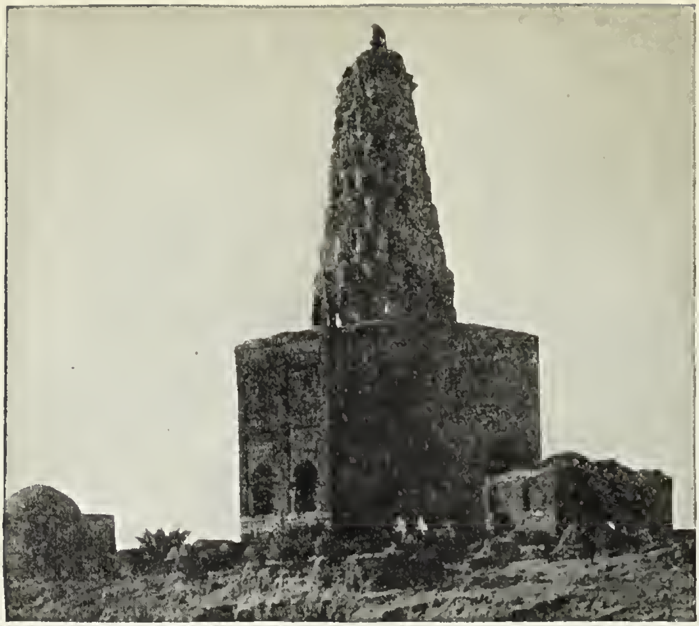
Kipling's description of the desert as "a piece of red hot sand with a palm on either hand" does not apply to the Hamad, or, indeed, to any other portion of northern Arabia. In the first place there is no sand, and, in the second, there are no palms, or, for that matter, anything else over a foot or so in height. Certain portions of the Hamad would, if irrigated, become as fertile as the Imperial Valley of California, of which it was said, barely a dozen years ago, that a coyote made its last will and testament before attempting to cross it. Many of the *wadis* in which we camped had quite excellent pasturage, even in late May, but interspersing these fertile patches were great lava-beds, strewn with fragments of volcanic rock as sharp as glass and somewhat resembling the slag from a blast-furnace. Generally speaking, the Hamad has a gravelly surface, frequently as smooth and pleasant as a gravel walk at home,



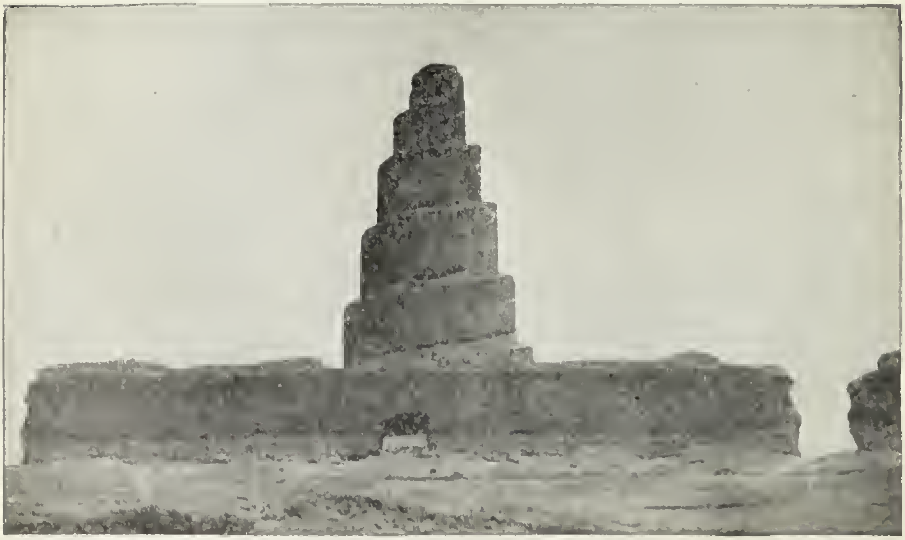
The tomb of Ali, the son-in-law of Mohammed, at Nedjef. This golden-domed tomb is regarded by the Moslems of the Shiah sect as the holiest place on earth, and thousands of corpses are brought here each year by "the caravans of the dead" to be buried in its sacred soil.



The tomb of Hussein, the son of Ali and the grandson of Mohammed, at Kerbela. The plain of Kerbela, where Hussein was killed in 680, has become as sacred as the city of Nedjef.



At the far end of an ancient Mohammedan cemetery in the outskirts of Baghdad rises a conspicuous and curious object, which appears, from a distance, to be an enormous pine cone balanced on a bandbox. This is the tomb of Zobeide, the favorite wife of Harun-al-Rashid. Here she lies buried, within sound of the city where she lived and laughed and loved.



The great spiral tower at Samarra, which, according to tradition, is the Tower of Babel.

dotted with small clumps of bunch-grass; so that it resembles an enormous brown mattress tufted with green. In places its dead flatness is broken by low plateaus, rising abruptly from the plain, or by small, isolated hills suggestive of South African kopjes, or again by great masses of volcanic rock, which look for all the world like huge piles of children's building-blocks. Sometimes these tumbled heaps assume the most curious and fantastic forms—turreted castles, crenelated battlements, medieval gateways—strongly reminiscent of the Hopi country of New Mexico. This resemblance became more striking toward nightfall, when the level rays of the setting sun transformed the rocks into huge lumps of amethyst, malachite, lapis lazuli, amber, and rosy coral. During the winter and early spring the desert, so we were told, is covered with wild flowers, but the only one we saw was a lovely orange-red poppy. Everything else had succumbed to the fiery blast of the sun.

The desert abounds in various forms of animal life, the most characteristic being the gazelle, of which we saw hundreds, usually in herds of from four to a dozen. These little animals, whose name is a synonym for gracefulness, are extremely timid and incredibly swift, it always being a source of astonishment to me when our Arabs succeeded in killing one. The usual method of hunting the gazelle is by stalking, the hunter concealing himself behind a camel, of which the gazelles are not suspicious and which they frequently permit to approach within easy rifle-range, whereupon the Arab, suddenly dropping on one knee, fires beneath the camel's belly. In the vicinity of Damascus, where the desert is exceptionally smooth and level, gazelles are hunted in motor-cars, being pursued relentlessly until they drop from exhaustion. I was told that this was a favorite sport of King Feisal during his brief sojourn in Damascus as ruler of Syria.

A day's march beyond the wells at El Garah we saw in the distance what we at first took to be another caravan or a raiding-party, but which proved, upon investigation, to be a drove of wild camels—or, to put it more accurately, camels which had not been domesticated—led by a gigantic cream-colored male. Though we saw no hyenas, we occasionally heard at night their eery, blood-curdling laughter, as well as the long-drawn, melancholy howls of jackals, with which the desert abounds. The only snake I saw was about four feet in length and resembled a copperhead; its bite, the Arabs warned us, was extremely poisonous. We also observed a peculiar bird, with short legs that could carry it through the brush at surprising speed, an extraordinarily long neck, and a brownish body about the size of a large turkey's. I could not learn its European name, but I think it was some variety of bustard. The desert was alive with many varieties of lizards, ranging in size from small ones with gray bodies and bright orange heads to an enormous green and yellow fellow the size of a small alligator—a salamander, perhaps.

The first day, in order to reach some wells, we continued the march until long after nightfall; but thereafter we usually pitched camp at sunset, a *wadi,* or shallow valley, containing pasturage and, if possible, water, being chosen for the purpose. By customarily pitching their tents on the floor of a valley, where they are at the mercy of riflemen posted on the surrounding hills, the Arabs violate one of the rudiments of military tactics; but Ghazi Mansour explained that such danger was more than counterbalanced by the fact that the camp-fires could not be seen by marauding Bedouins. The caravan leader having selected the camping-site and indicated where the tents were to be pitched, the camels were "barracked" and unloaded with surprising rapidity and method. Rigid discipline was maintained among the Arabs, and everything was done in perfect order. The huge bales of merchandise, sewed up in burlaps, were placed so as to form a *zariba,* or inclosure, which would afford almost complete protection from rifle-fire in case of attack, the black tents of goat's-hair being erected close by. Our own tent, which had been provided by Mohammed Bassam and was of canvas, we insisted on having pitched at least a hundred yards from the main encampment; otherwise the chattering of the Arabs and the grunting of the camels would have made sleep out of the question. As soon as the tents had been pitched, the camels were driven off to graze in charge of herders, being brought back at nightfall, however, and hobbled in a long line immediately without the walls of the *zariba.* As soon as darkness closed in, the rifles were placed in readiness for instant use, sentinels were posted, and all the other precautions imperative in an enemy's country were rigidly enforced.

After supper, prepared by Ladew and Sherin on the Primus stoves and usually consisting of tinned soup, tinned meat, tinned artichokes or asparagus, tinned fruit, Arab bread with jam, tea, and a bottle of Sauterne or Médoc, Ghazi Mansour would stroll over to our tent for a visit, and, I suspect, to partake of the contents of a box of *loucoum* ("Turkish Delight"), which I had brought from Damascus and for which he had an inordinate fondness. As he spoke no English, and as we knew only a few words of Arabic, the conversation was carried on through the medium of Fuad, who made an excellent interpreter. Occasionally Captain Abbas, who spoke French with some fluency, or Rahat Effendi would join the circle about our camp-fire, and now and then some of the cameleers would drop in, for the Arabs are a thoroughly democratic people. These fireside conversations, though carried on perforce through an interpreter, were intensely fascinating, for we heard strange tales of the desert—sand-storms, Bedouin raids, terrible waterless marches—from the lips of men who had themselves been the chief actors in them. They told us of the mysterious cities of Nether Arabia, some of which have never been seen by a European, and of the strange customs practised in them; of the great chieftains of the hinterland, who carry huge sums of gold about with them in safes lashed to the backs of camels and who number their slaves by the hundreds and their animals by the hundred thousand; of whole caravans perishing from thirst and whole tribes wiped out by massacre; of gun-running exploits and the details of the slave-trade (for think not that the traffic in "black ivory" was ended by the Geneva Convention); of intertribal wars in which thousands of men lost their lives, but news of which never reached the European papers. It was a wild, picturesque, colorful, alluring life of which these grave-faced men spoke so matter-of-factly, as far removed from the imaginary accounts of novelists as one could well imagine.

There is no twilight in the desert. One moment the sun rides high in the heavens; the next it dies in brief but flaming splendor. There are a few moments of ruddy afterglow, and then at one bound comes the dark. One by one the stars appear, as when the lights are turned on at nightfall in a city, until the purple-velvet sky is cut across by a broad swath of silver dust—the Milky Way. And so we would fall asleep, lulled by the murmur of Arab voices and the grumbling of the camels, in our nostrils the acrid scent of dung-fed camp-fires, our sun-scorched faces fanned by the delicious coolness of the night breeze, above us a moon that looked like an enormous silver platter, and the stars so very near. It is usually late before the camp falls asleep, for your Arab, who can get along with surprisingly little rest, dearly loves to gossip. . . . The fires die down to beds of glowing embers. The night wind rises and I draw my blankets about me more closely. I can discern the dim, misshapen forms of the camels tethered without the *zariba* walls. A sentry, rifle on shoulder, muffled to the eyes in his *abiyeh,* moves past on noiseless feet. A jackal howls in the darkness. Something rustles in the undergrowth—a snake or a lizard, no doubt. The moon transforms the yellow desert into a lake of molten amber. Over everything a magic silence falls.

After leaving El Garah we experienced several terrible days of mirage. I do not know whether our eyes had been affected by weariness and the sun-glare, but on every hand we saw lakes, brushwood, low hills, and always they proved to be the same dark patches of gravel. Time and time again I could have sworn that we were approaching broad lagoons—we could actually see the reeds along the shore and the wind-stirred ripples on the surface of the water—but no reeds or water were ever there. It was easy to understand how men dying of thirst are lured on and on by this curious optical illusion. The scientists explain the phenomenon of the mirage by saying that "a ray of light traversing a homogeneous medium is deviated from its rectilinear path when it enters a medium of different refractive index; it is therefore readily seen that the path of a ray through continuously varying media is necessarily curvilinear, being compounded of infinitesimally small rectilinear deviations." Clear and simple, is it not? But I prefer the explanation of the ancients, who believed in the *Fata Morgana.* It is more in keeping with the mysticism of the desert.

The fourth night out from El Garah we encamped by some all-but-dried-up wells at the foot of a butte which rose abruptly from the plain. Scores of acres in the vicinity of this butte were pitted with the wells which had been driven by untold generations of thirsty desert travelers and had dried up after them. I have no doubt that among those long-dry wells was one that had been dug, when the world was very young, to supply the camels of the Queen of Sheba bearing gifts to King Solomon. Those wells which were not entirely empty were miserable affairs, mere pits in the soft limestone rock, the muddy, brackish water being so low that it could be drawn only by lowering buckets at the end of several halter-ropes tied together. The Arabs, I might add, do not observe even the most rudimentary rules of sanitation and, as a result, the desert wells are almost invariably polluted, the water quite unfit to drink for man or beast.

The tents had been pitched on a gravelly slope at the foot of the cliff; Sherin had the stove going; and, to pass the time while supper was preparing, I had climbed to the summit of the butte to take a look over the surrounding country with my glasses for signs of Bedouins or game. Quite suddenly there appeared in the west what appeared to be a moving cloud of purplish brown, which advanced with the speed of an express-train, quickly blotting out the fiery ball of the sun. The sky turned from turquoise to indigo, and through this ominous pall darted incessant spears of lightning. The thunder was continuous, like a *rafale* of cannon. For some moments I stood rooted to the rock in fascination, for I had never witnessed a scene so awesome or terrifying. Then I turned and ran, sliding and scrambling down the steep face of the butte oblivious of cuts and bruises. Just as I gained the camp the storm struck us. The velocity of the wind was terrific; it was like a blast from an airplane propeller multiplied a thousand times. The air was so filled with driven sand that I could not see a rod in front of me; it stung and lacerated my face until it felt as though it had been rubbed with emery-paper. The tent-pegs were jerked from the ground, and the canvas, bellying like a balloon, would have been blown away had we not thrown our weight upon the guy-ropes. The flimsy Arab tents, less firmly anchored, disappeared before the blast like newspapers in a gale. The camels, which were being driven back from pasture, promptly became panic-stricken and stampeded through the camp, in their mad rush trampling on everything that was in their path. In an instant pandemonium reigned. The uproar was deafening: the shouts of the Arabs, the screams of frightened women, the snarling of the camels, the splintering of wood, the clatter of tinware, the ripping of canvas, and, over all, the incessant roll of thunder and the deep roar of the mighty wind. Then came the rain. The heavens emptied themselves in a downpour such as I had never dreamed of. The water did not come down in sheets or streams, but in a solid volume, like the falls at Niagara. In less time than it takes to tell about it, our beds, our blankets, our clothing, and such of our food as was not tinned were drenched as with a fire-hose. The storm passed as abruptly as it came, leaving havoc in its wake. In fifteen minutes the rain had ceased and the desert was as breathless as before, but in that brief space the broad *wadi* on the slopes of which we were encamped had been transformed into a lake a quarter of a mile long and in the center several feet deep. We spent the whole of the next day at the wells, drying out our belongings and repairing the damage wrought by the storm, the Arabs availing themselves of this unexpected interlude of idleness to bathe in the suddenly created lake. Even a cloud-burst in the desert has its sanitary lining.

Because it became known in the camp that we had with us a small supply of medicines and simple remedies, such as iodine, quinine, dysentery-cure, and arnica, the simple-minded children of the sands regarded us as physicians and fully qualified to treat all the ailments to which human flesh is heir. One of the passengers, an elderly Turk, whose face had been terribly disfigured by the kick of a camel and who appeared to be in imminent danger of losing one of his eyes, implored us to give him treatment. Owing to the limitations of our medicine-chest, there was little that we could do, but we sponged out the wound with boiled water, used iodine liberally as an antiseptic and bandaged him up in a manner which was more impressive than professional, whereupon he seemed quite satisfied. One of the camel men presented himself at our tent bent double from an attack of colic. Him we dosed with capsules known as "C C" and familiar to every one who has been in the army, where they are popularly reputed to be compounded of nitroglycerin, cordite, and T N T. He never troubled us again.

I might add, in passing, that before leaving Constantinople all four of us had been "shot" for every inoculable disease known to science. Dr. Hoover, the able chief of the American Hospital in Stamboul, had inoculated us with preventive serums for typhoid, paratyphoid, cholera, and smallpox, so that, as Hutchings remarked, the only way to kill us was with an ax. As, however, we had time for only the first cholera inoculation before sailing, he suggested that we take the second and third in Beirut, where there is an admirably equipped American hospital. Upon our arrival, therefore, we called upon the head of the hospital, Mrs. Dale, who is one of the American pioneers in Syria and whom I had known since I had served as American vice-consul-general in that city many years before. "But I'm afraid you won't find any cholera serum in Syria," said Mrs. Dale, when I had explained the object of our visit. "You see, we haven't had a case of cholera here for nearly thirty years."

The morning that we left the scene of the cloudburst our attention was attracted by a violent altercation which suddenly broke out in the Arab camp. The Arab, I should mention, has a reputation for stolidity and taciturnity which is not wholly deserved, for, upon provocation, he often becomes as excited and demonstrative as a Latin. The parties to the quarrel, it appeared, were Ghazi Mansour and a poorly dressed Arab who, with his wife and a small baby, had joined the caravan at Damascus. Their voices rose to so shrill a pitch, their gestures became so menacing, that I hunted up Fuad and asked him what was the matter.

"The man has n't paid his passage-money," Fuad explained. "He promised to pay it when we were half-way to Baghdad, but now he insists that he has n't any money at all. So Ghazi has told him that, if he does n't pay up, he and his family will be left behind."

"What a perfectly absurd agreement!" I exclaimed. "If the fellow could n't pay his passage before leaving Damascus, how on earth did Ghazi expect him to pay it in the middle of the Arabian desert? Did he think that there would be a bank out here where he could cash a check or a letter of credit?"

By way of reply Fuad shrugged his shoulders.

"Of course the sheikh won't leave him behind," I remarked easily. "He 's only trying to bluff the fellow into paying."

"I don't think that Ghazi is bluffing," was the answer. "If he once says he 'll do a thing, he 'll do it. Make no mistake about that."

"But, good heavens, man!" I exclaimed, horrified, "he can't seriously consider leaving any human beings, much less a woman and a baby, in this God-forsaken place! Why, there may not be another caravan along for months. This route is hardly ever used nowadays. They would die in a few days from starvation if the Bedouins did n't murder them."

Again the noncommittal shrug of the shoulders.

"We 'll see," said Fuad, calmly.

And we did see. For, sure enough, when the march began, Ghazi Mansour held to his threat, and the recalcitrant debtor and his family were left behind. They were not alone, however, for the venerable Rahat Effendi and his stout, matronly wife and his daughter and his daughter's husband and four of the other Turkish passengers —all honor to them!—remained behind, too.

"If you desert these people," the stout-hearted old Turk told the sheikh, "I and my family and my friends will stay with them. If you leave them you must leave us also."

"As you please," the sheikh responded imperturbably, signaling with his camel-stick for the caravan to proceed.

To tell the truth, I did n't believe for an instant that Ghazi Mansour, who to us had shown so many kindnesses, had any intention of carrying out his threat; but I quickly realized that I had not taken into consideration the strain of savagery which lies so near the surface of the Arab character. When we had covered several miles without a sign of halting I became alarmed. Through my glasses I could see the pathetic little group still clustered about the litters which the sheikh had left them. I could make out the woman holding her baby in her arms. And about them in every direction stretched that arid, sun-stricken waste.

"Come along and do some interpreting for me," I called to Fuad, who appeared quite indifferent to the whole proceeding. "I want to have a heart-to-heart talk with the sheikh."

"Look here, Ghazi," I began placatingly, when I had spurred my pony abreast of his *hejin*, "you can't go off and leave these people in the desert to die."

"But I have," he returned grimly.

The callousness of his reply stirred my anger.

"It 's nothing short of murder," I declared hotly, "and you don't need to be told what they do to murderers in British territory, where we are going."

His face flushed darkly as Fuad translated my remark, but he made no answer.

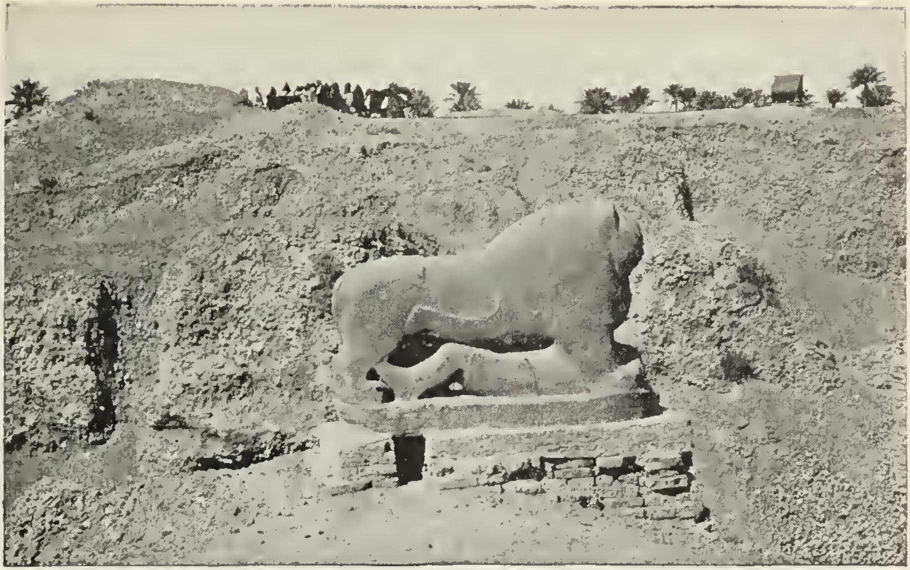
"Now, listen carefully to what I am saying, Ghazi," I continued sternly. "Send back for those people, and when we reach Baghdad I 'll tell the story to the British authorities and see that the man either pays you or goes to jail. Abandon them, and, so help me God, I 'll go straight to the high commissioner and lay a charge of murder against you.''

''But putting the man in jail won't bring me my money,'' said the sheikh, less angered by my threat than I had expected, ''and I am a poor man. I can't afford to carry passengers for nothing.''

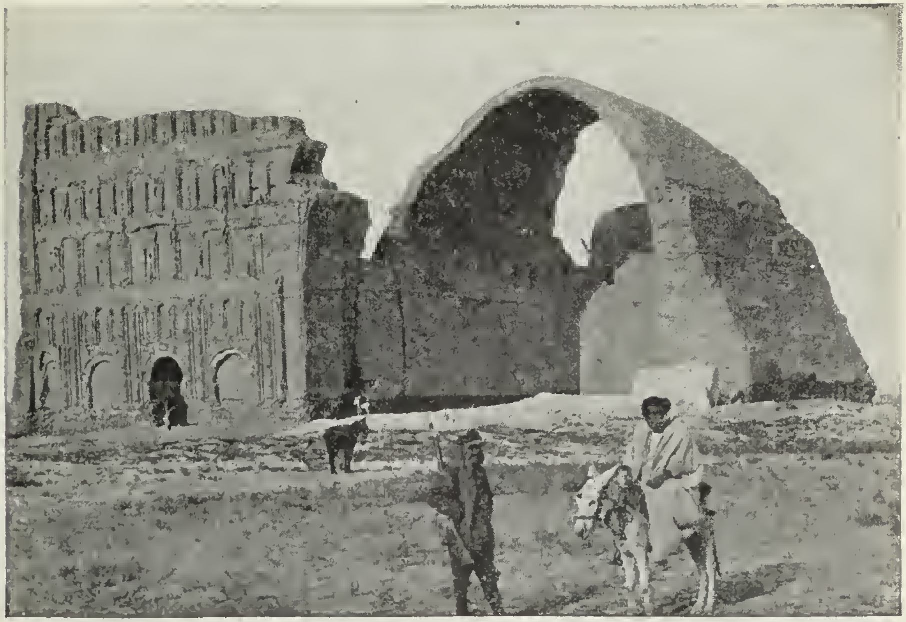
''You had better lose your money than be hanged,'' I answered firmly. ''And British justice is not to be trifled with.''

For some minutes he rode on in silence, deep in meditation. Then he drew up his *hejin* and raised his hand, palm outward, to halt the caravan. A moment later, in obedience to a sharp command, a group of Arabs with led-camels detached themselves from the main body and went scurrying back toward the little party marooned in the desert.

As we approached the Euphrates the heat became so intense that we feared for the effect on Hutchings if he had to endure another long day's ride in the sun; so I prevailed upon the sheikh to advance the hour of starting from four A.M. to midnight. To this request he acceded with some reluctance, for it requires constant vigilance to keep the camels together in the darkness, and on the little-used route we were following it was



Babylon. One of the monuments unearthed on the great processional road which led from Nebuchadnezzar's palace to Marduk's temple. In the excavated palace the visitor may now view the very room in which Alexander the Great died, and here, laid out upon the roofs of an unoccupied building, were the famous Hanging Gardens.



Ctesiphon. Eighteen miles south of Baghdad are the imposing remains of the palace of Chosroes II, the last and most remarkable monarch of the Sassanian dynasty. Under Chosroes the valley of the Euphrates attained its highest state of prosperity, and the royal residence at Ctesiphon was the most important town of the world of its period.

Basra, on the Shatt-el-Arab, has long been known as "the harbor of Mesopotamia," being the head of deep-sea navigation.

The country about Basra is covered with a network of canals, and, since the British conquest, has been transformed from a malarious swamp into a land of prosperous farms and gardens.

difficult to find the way by night. I shall always number that last ride among my pleasantest recollections. The night was milder than usual, and the gentle breeze brought to our nostrils the unmistakable scent of water and vegetation. The camels scented it, too, and stepped out eagerly. The air was as soft as the cheek of a young girl. Every one was in better spirits now, for after many weary days we were almost within sight of the great river. And low in the eastern sky, in the direction of Baghdad, hung a crescent moon with a single star almost between its horns, like the emblem on the Turkish flag, which, our Arabs declared, was an unfailing omen of good fortune.

I was riding beside the sheikh at the head of the dim procession, the purple of the night was almost imperceptibly merging into the gray of dawn, when from a low ridge at our left came a harsh command to halt. *"Andak! Andak!"* Instantly our Arabs unslung their rifles—I could hear the rattle of the breech-blocks all down the line—and the caravan hastily closed up. At the same moment a score of mounted figures suddenly appeared on our flank, dimly outlined against the graying sky. Ghazi Mansour shouted a question, the answer to which was evidently reassuring, for, lowering his rifle, he rode forward to meet them. There was a brief parley in the darkness; then he came riding back, accompanied by a young Arab mounted on the most beautiful white *hejin* that I had yet seen. Though his head and shoulders were enveloped in the *keffieh* of a desert Bedouin, I caught a glimpse of smartly cut breeches and a brass-buttoned tunic and a Sam Browne belt, so that I was not surprised when Ghazi Mansour introduced him to us as the *bimbashi* (major) in command of a frontier patrol of the 'Iraq Camel Corps. Then we drew a breath of relief, for we had reached Mesopotamia at last. Sherin, though an Irishman, visibly swelled with pride, for, as he explained he was once again within that empire on which the sun never sets and under the protection of the Union Jack.

The *bimbashi,* it appeared, had been informed by his scouts that a mysterious force of considerable strength was approaching by a route seldom used by caravans, and, assuming that we must be either gun-runners or raiders, he had arranged for our reception an extremely neat little surprise-party. His men, to the number of a score or more, he had posted along the low hills which formed the sides of the valley through which we were advancing, and had set up a machine-gun so that it could enfilade a shallow *wadi* through which we must pass. He was an exceedingly smart and soldierly young man, though I learned afterward from the British constabulary commander at Ramadie that two years before he had been an untamed son of the desert, dwelling in a goat's-hair tent and wearing his hair in braids. He and his troopers were striking examples of how a British drill-sergeant can ''make riflemen from mud.'' He insisted that we should accompany him to his camp, pitched in a deep nullah at the foot of an ancient Turkish fort, where we sat cross-legged on thick red carpets and consumed enormous quantities of coffee, tea, and cigarettes. The sun was high in the blue before we waved him farewell and started on the last lap of our desert journey, with the Euphrates only four hours' march away.

It was high noon when, topping a little rise, we saw, a few miles across the plain, the flat-roofed buildings of Kabaissa, the westernmost outpost on the Mesopotamian frontier. Through my glasses I could discern, flying above a building somewhat more pretentious than the others, an unfamiliar banner with stripes of black and white and green, and a triangle of red, which I knew for the flag of 'Iraq. Beyond the town was a thick fringe of date-palms, the first trees of any kind that we had seen since leaving Damascus, and beyond that again, writhing across the desert like a monstrous gray-green snake, was that most historic of all rivers, the Euphrates. We had crossed Arabia.

At Kabaissa we found awaiting us a motor-car which had been sent out to meet us by Sir Percy Cox, the British high commissioner, who had been notified of our impending arrival by the British high command in Constantinople. Though we were begrimed with dirt, blistered by the sun, and weary to the point of exhaustion, I think that we all experienced a distinct pang of regret that our journey across the desert was at an end, that our Great Adventure was over. I know that when I bade farewell to Ghazi Mansour and Rahat Effendi and Fuad and Captain Abbas and little Achmet I felt that I was taking leave of old and tried friends. For many days we had ridden with them, boot to boot, across the world's most inhospitable waste, and never once had they failed in courage or generosity or kindness. They are all scattered now. Rahat Effendi and his family, I presume, are again established in their home on the banks of the Tigris. Fuad is wearing the uniform of King Feisal and has, perhaps—who knows?—married the little mademoiselle who so courageously accompanied him across the desert. Captain Abbas is doubtless commanding a squadron of the camel corps at some lonely frontier outpost. And Ghazi Mansour, if he has escaped the perils of the desert, continues to lead his caravan across the waste. Though they are of an alien race and another faith, they are brave hearts and charming gentlemen. To them, across the miles, I raise my glass.

From Kabaissa there is a road of sorts, a very bad road indeed, which follows the right bank of the Euphrates through Hit and Ramadie to Felluja, where it crosses the river by a rickety pontoon-bridge, thence traversing the narrow strip of sand, barely twenty miles in width, which at this point separates the Euphrates and the Tigris. By glancing at the map you will see that these two mighty rivers inclose a region shaped not unlike the figure 8, though the upper, or northwestern, loop is almost double the area of the lower, or southeastern, one. Neither geography nor history offers any general name for this region, but traditional usage applies to the district inclosed within the larger loop the name of Mesopotamia (land between the rivers), which the Arabs call el-Jezireh (the island); while the lower loop, from the neck of Felluja to the head of the Persian Gulf, corresponds to the ancient Babylonia, being referred to by the natives themselves as 'Iraq Arabi. The combined regions now form the Kingdom of 'Iraq, an Arab state under the mandate of Great Britain.

Hit—appropriately pronounced "heat"—is one of the numberless localities assigned by tradition as the site of the Garden of Eden. If tradition is to be relied upon, then Adam and Eve must have led an extremely trying existence, for it is the hottest and the most forbidding spot that I have encountered in many years of travel. Though built on the banks of the Euphrates, the terrible sun makes the water too hot to bathe in and transforms the box-like mud hovels of the town into veritable ovens. The country round about, for miles and miles, is so white with alkali that it looks as though it were covered with snow, and on these stricken expanses the sun beats down mercilessly, the glare being almost unsupportable to eyes not protected with colored glasses. This sun-blasted region resembles those great areas covered with lime refuse which are found in the vicinity of soda ash plants in the United States, and, as though to accentuate its repellant aspect, it is dotted with bitumen-pits, the smoke from which is visible for a great distance. The only living creature that could exist in Hit with any degree of comfort would be a salamander.

We had an exciting, and very nearly a disastrous, experience while crossing the long pontoon-bridge which spans the Euphrates at Felluja. We had driven upon the rickety structure immediately in the wake of a large drove of camels, a hundred or more, which were going in the same direction. When half-way across, the animals, for some unexplainable reason, suddenly became panic-stricken. They milled around for a moment, snorting and grumbling, and then, without the slightest warning, they turned and stampeded in our direction, bearing down upon us in a solid mass, the structure shaking beneath their feet until I momentarily expected it to give way. There was no time for our driver to back his car off the bridge and, as it was very narrow, there was no room for the frantic animals to pass between the flimsy rails which guarded the edges and the machine. Realizing the imminent danger of the whole structure's collapsing and precipitating us all into the river, which at this point is very wide, we precipitately abandoned the car in the middle of the bridge and ran for the shore. Finding their way blocked by the car, the panic of the camels turned to frenzy. Crashing through the railing, some of them succeeded in plunging into the river and swimming safely to land, but others fell into the wooden scows which served as pontoons, their long necks and legs becoming caught between the thwarts and rendering them helpless. Stripping off their garments, the Arab cameleers plunged into the stream, the surface of which was quickly dotted with the heads of men and camels, the former screaming *"Hi yah! Hi yah! Hoosh! Hoosh! Hoosh!"* as, clinging desperately to the tails of their charges, they endeavored to steer them toward the shore before they could be carried down-stream by the current, which is very rapid. It required an hour's hard work and the combined efforts of several score sweating, panting, cursing natives to extricate the animals which had become entangled in the pontoons, and to restore traffic. It was an exciting entry into Babylonia.

As it was impossible, what with tire trouble and bad roads, to make the trip from Kabaissa to Baghdad in a single day, we spent the night in Ramadie as the guests of the British political officer, a youthful Oxonian who rules with tact and understanding a region as large as many a European kingdom. We dined on the roof with a dozen other British officers and officials, most of them mere boys, and, after relating the story of our adventures, listened spellbound until far into the night to tales which would have provided material for a dozen novels. So that it was very late when I took to my bed, and the crescent moon swung low to the morn. But I could not sleep. I lay on my back and stared up at the stars. I felt that, though this was the end of a chapter, it was not the end of the book. Some day, I knew not when, I should come back to Arabia and the desert, and my swaying, silent-footed camels would bear me East again.

CHAPTER VI

BY THE TROUBLED WATERS OF BABYLON

SEEN from a distance, Baghdad is very beautiful, with its peacock-colored mosques and minarets framed by the lofty date-palms and the noble river in the foreground, but the moment one sets foot within the city and sees the narrow, filthy streets and the miserable houses built of crumbling mud the illusion vanishes. Situated in a region where there is no stone and virtually no timber, Baghdad was built, like all the cities of the Babylonian plain, of brick and tiles. Like Tehran, it is a mud-brown city, this effect being emphasized by the thick layer of dust which lies over everything. The only spots of color are provided by the mosques, which are the city's sole redeeming architectural feature, their splendid domes and slender minarets being covered with glazed tiles of blue and green and yellow, laid in charming arabesque designs, so that they look for all the world like enormous pieces of cloisonné. But, with a few exceptions, they are all comparatively modern. Of the magnificent city which was

Harun-al-Rashid's capital; which, at the height of its fame and prosperity, had a population of two million souls; which, in literature, art, and science, divided the supremacy of the world with Cordova; and which was the religious capital of all Islam, and the political capital of the greater part of it, at a time when Islam bore the same relation to civilization that Christianity does to-day—of this city, made famous by the Thousand and One Nights, virtually nothing remains.

The original city of Baghdad was built on the western bank of the Tigris, but this is now, and has been for centuries, little more than a suburb of the larger and more important city on the eastern shore. The river, which at this point is nearly three hundred yards across and so swift as to well justify its name of "the Arrow," is spanned by two pontoon-bridges, one in the suburbs, and the other, known as the Maude Bridge, in the heart of the town. The traffic on these bridges, which are too narrow to permit of vehicles' passing one another, is as rigidly controlled as the traffic on Fifth Avenue, flags by day and lanterns by night indicating when the long lines of waiting vehicles may go and when they must stop. The streams of traffic which flow unceasingly over these creaking, swaying structures provide a scene of inexhaustible fascination: long files of stately camels, desert-bound; strings of sturdy pack-mules, gaily caparisoned with strings of blue beads to ward off the evil eye, and tassels and colored leathers; droves of diminutive donkeys, jingling with bells, only their ears and tails showing beneath their enormous burdens; creaking wagons drawn by lumbering buffaloes, their elephant-like hides caked with mud; restive, wiry polo-ponies ridden by Indian syces with bundles of polo-mallets under their arms; clanking field-batteries, the helmeted gunners clinging to the swaying caissons; armored cars with the slim barrels of machine-guns peering from their turrets; ponderous army trucks, bearing the broad arrow of the War Department, piled high with supplies and ammunition; snorting motor-cycles piloted by despatch-riders whose bare knees and arms are tanned to the color of a much-smoked meerchaum; queer two-wheeled mule-carts, with Indian drivers, belonging to the Army Service Corps; lancers of the king's body-guard on well-groomed Walers; dilapidated gharries—the public conveyances of Baghdad—drawn by half-starved ponies, their harness eked out with rope; and motor-cars of every size and model, from lordly Rolls-Royces, with red-tabbed staff-officers lounging in the tonneaus, to bustling, self-important Fords loaded to the guards with natives in skirts and turbans. Nowhere else in all the world can one witness so colorful or varied a panorama.

Running through the very heart of Baghdad, straight as though laid out with a ruler, is the hideous thoroughfare known as New Street. It was cut by the Turkish commander, Khalil Pasha, on the advice of the Germans, and was ruthlessly done. It looks, indeed, as though a giant shell had ripped its way through the busiest quarters of the city, shearing off the fronts of the houses so that their interiors are immodestly exposed, and leaving in its wake a swath of débris and destruction. No more unpopular thing was ever done in any city, for no attention was paid to the rights of the property-owners and great suffering and financial loss ensued, yet, on the whole, it was a good thing to do, for such a thoroughfare was needed. Since the war, what with the Arab revolts and native unrest and uncertainty as to the length of the British occupation, conditions in Baghdad have been in such a state of flux that the property-owners along New Street have hesitated to erect new buildings or even to patch up the old ones. In fact, barring the rather imposing British residency on the west bank, there is not a really substantial building in the city. The British and Indian merchants who followed the armies of occupation have opened their shops in basements or store-rooms, with the goods displayed on packing-cases or on counters improvised from trestles and planks. Even the leading banks occupy hole-in-the-wall quarters, reached by alleys so dim and squalid that you wonder if there can possibly be anything respectable at the end. As a result, the stranger receives an impression of impermanency, as though every one was ready to pack up and clear out at a moment's notice, as, to tell the truth, they are. Were it not for its many beautiful mosques, Baghdad the one-time magnificent would bear a striking resemblance to a Western boom town.

Baghdad possesses the unenviable reputation of being one of the hottest cities in the world, and I can vouch for the fact that its reputation is fully justified, for it was our misfortune to arrive there at the beginning of the hot season. Sometimes, in the months of June, July, August, and September, especially when the simoon is blowing, the thermometer at break of day is known to stand at 112, while at noon it rises to 120, and about two o'clock to 125, dropping to 115 by sunset. In order to endure such heat, the population is compelled, during the four months of the hot season, to spend its nights on the roofs and its days in the cellars. By cellar I mean the *serdah,* a basement sunk considerably below the level of the ground, its half-windows filled with the prickly camel's-thorn known as *agul,* thus forming a sort of lattice. This is constantly sprinkled with water, as is the tiled floor of the *serdah,* the hot, dry wind which blows through the camel's-thorn causing rapid evaporation and creating a sort of fictitious coolness. Lady Cox, the wife of the British high commissioner, assured me, however, that the only way to keep a room habitable during the hot season is to close the windows and doors entirely in the early morning, and to keep them closed until nightfall, thus shutting out the hot air. That this method is practicable was proved to my complete satisfaction by the extremely moderate temperature prevailing in the rooms of the British residency, which, even in the middle of the day, were surprisingly cool and comfortable. But toward sunset these closed-up rooms become unbearably close, and then the entire city mounts to the flat housetops, where it eats and sleeps. The hours spent on the roofs are almost as wearisome as those passed in the cellars, however, for it is impossible to read or write, as the presence of a light attracts armies of mosquitoes, while one has to arise at daybreak and descend into the *serdah* in order to escape the dangerous rays of the morning sun. This sort of life naturally results in revolutionizing social customs. For example, I well remember accompanying the American consul, Mr. Owens, on a round of official calls at Lesser Bairam which marks the end of the fasting month of Ramadan, when we started at six o'clock in the morning; and when the Emir Feisal was proclaimed king of 'Iraq in August, 1921, the coronation ceremony began before it was fairly light. As might be expected, Baghdad is not a healthy city to live in. Cholera and plague, those two most dreaded diseases of the East, are common; heat apoplexy is not unknown; to drink unboiled water or uncooked vegetables is to invite death from typhoid; cases of dysentery are as frequent as influenza is at home; and few Europeans, no matter how many precautions they may take, live in the city for any length of time without contracting that disfiguring parasitic growth known as the "Baghdad button." This boil-like eruption, no certain remedy for which has yet been discovered, extends from Aleppo to Persia. Though not painful, it is very disfiguring, as, when healed, it leaves permanent white scars behind, sometimes as large as a dollar, again in the form of a line, the width of a pencil, which frequently extends across the entire face. Natives, foreigners, and even dogs and cats are all subject to the malady, and visitors are sometimes attacked by it long after they have left the regions where it is prevalent.

But one overlooks the discomforts of life in the ancient city in the glamour and never-ending variety of its street scenes. Come and stroll with me along New Street at twilight, when the population emerges from its *serdahs* to obtain a breath of air. The throng which fills the dusty thoroughfare from curb to curb forms a human kaleidoscope almost without parallel—haughty, hawk-nosed Arabs, their keen eyes peering out from beneath *keffiehs,* which are bound in place by *agals* that look like enormous hanks of brown yarn; Hebrew women, covered from head to heel by gorgeous silken *abahs* brocaded in gold and silver, their features hidden by curious black visors, from beneath which one occasionally gets a glimpse of languorous, alluring eyes; swarthy, swaggering Kurds with towering *kolas,* the same curious head-dress as depicted on the Babylonian tablets of three thousand years ago; Bedouins from the desert, their braided hair hanging down before their ears, like the pigtails of school-girls; Moslem mullahs in flowing robes and snowy turbans; Jews in red tarbooshes and misfit European clothing; barefooted coolie women with voluminous carmine skirts and silver anklets and turquoise-studded nose-rings; patriarchal-looking

Turks with yellow scarfs wound about their turbans, denoting that they have made the *hadj* to the Holy Places; descendants of the Prophet, wearing scarfs and girdles of vivid green (I counted seventeen of them in a ten-minute drive); dignified, upstanding Sikhs, their black beards braided and tied beneath the chin, about their turbans steel bracelets with razor-edges; stocky, slouch-hatted Ghurkas, wearing at their waists the terrible broad-bladed knife which is their national weapon; rosy-cheeked British Tommies in shorts and spine-pads and quilted helmets; dandified young officers of the Royal Air Force, strolling along as though they were on Piccadilly; British merchants in pipe-clayed shoes and pipe-clayed topées and immaculate suits of starched white linen; staff-officers of the army of occupation, boots and belts gleaming like mahogany, their breasts ablaze with campaign-ribbons; white-faced European women, under gaily colored sunshades, dashing by in cars or dog-carts on their way to the Sports Club for tea and tennis; Parsee traders from Bombay; Arab merchants from Bahrein and Maskat; negro slaves from East Africa, Russian refugees, Armenians, Assyrians, Chaldeans, Circassians, Lurs, Hindus, Chinese, Egyptians, Persians, Levantines, world without end, amen. . . .

We arrived in Baghdad toward the end of Ramadan. This, the ninth month of the Mohammedan calendar, is comparable to the Lent of the Christians. In theory Ramadan lasts twenty-nine days, terminating with the festival of Lesser Bairam, which corresponds in a way to our Easter and is celebrated with great feasting and rejoicing. But, according to the rules of Islam, Ramadan terminates only when the new moon is sighted, the law requiring that it must be seen by at least six reputable men, who shall take oath to that effect before a *cadi.* On the last day of the fast the native population of Baghdad was agog with suppressed excitement. For days beforehand the cooks and bakers had been working overtime, their stalls being piled high with the sticky sweetmeats and other delicacies that the Oriental loves. The restaurants and coffee-houses had made elaborate preparations for the impending feast; bands had been engaged, extra waiters hired, and in some cases the chairs and tables extended so far into the streets as completely to block vehicular traffic. The papers had announced that the first glimpse of the new moon was to be heralded by a salute of artillery from the citadel, but the hot evening wore slowly on, and, though the crowds that packed the streets became increasingly restless, no salute came, for the very excellent reason that the new moon had not been sighted. It began to look as though the feast must be postponed, in which event the restaurant and coffee-house keepers would suffer great financial loss. By eleven o'clock I had given up hope and had taken to my bed on the roof of the hotel and the crowds in the streets were slowly and reluctantly dispersing. But, shortly after midnight, I was suddenly awakened by the roar of cannon. It seemed that the despairing caterers, seeing their profits disappearing, had despatched keen-eyed observers to the highest of the city's minarets, and that a group of these, having descried the anxiously awaited Lady Luna, had hastened to attest the fact before a magistrate, whereupon the month of fasting was officially declared as at an end.

Now, far be it from me to question the good faith of these amateur astronomers, but the fact remains that a new moon is usually visible very early in the evening and frequently in the late afternoon. But picture the disappointment of millions of Christians if the Christmas festivities threatened to be delayed because, forsooth, a slim silver crescent was not discoverable in the heavens! Surely some eager and optimistic souls could be depended upon to avert such a calamity by going out and finding it. The salvo of artillery was the signal for pandemonium to break loose. Bands blared, horns tooted, friends shouted greetings to one another, and the hungry thousands proceeded to gorge themselves with roast meats, pastries, and sherbets until they could hold no more. It reminded me of an old-time New Year celebration in New York, but with this difference: no one thought it necessary to get drunk. But the Arabs, so the League of Nations mandate asserts, are a backward people.

The only European hostelry in Baghdad worthy of the name is the Hotel Maude, whose broad terraces command a superb view of the swiftly flowing Tigris. It would not be considered much of a hotel in any European city, but it is the center of social life in the City of the Caliphs. Here the officers from the lonely frontier outposts come to spend their infrequent leaves of absence, the long bar of polished mahogany, with its mirrors, its gleaming foot-rail, and its half-dozen white-jacketed attendants, being lined from morning to midnight with thirsty youths in khaki. Here foregather daily men who have not met since they were at Eton and Harrow, at Oxford, Cambridge, and Sandhurst, or since they paced the muddy trenches of the Ypres Salient or along the Somme. There are political and irrigation officials, officers of the

R.A.F. and the gendarmerie and the camel corps. They come from the shores of the Persian Gulf, and the upper reaches of the Tigris and from the fringes of the desert, and, though many of them rule territories as large as European kingdoms, they laugh and joke and ‘‘spoof’’ each other as though they were school-boys instead of empire builders.

One is perpetually thirsty in Baghdad, and, as the city water is distinctly unfit to drink, there is an enormous consumption of locally made soda-water, which sells for two annas (about four cents) a bottle. By this I do not mean to imply, however, that there is no demand for those stronger beverages bearing the labels of Messrs. Gordon, Hennessy, and Haig and Haig, for there is, but it is only the barest justice to add that one sees very few cases of intoxication.

There are no baths in the Hotel Maude, but, when one feels the need of bathing—which one does very frequently in that hot and humid climate —he has only to clap his hands, whereupon a servant drags into the room a tin tub, large and round and shallow, which he fills with water from Standard Oil tins. If a warm bath is required the tins are permitted to stand in the sun for a quarter of an hour, when the water becomes too hot to use without cooling. One passes the long and torrid hours between tiffin and sunset by taking a siesta, stretched, stripped to the skin, on the bed, above which whirls an electric punkah. Unless the mosquito-bars are drawn, however, the dense swarms of flies make sleep out of the question. In the Government Book Shop in Baghdad I came across a Mesopotamian alphabet in rime, one verse of which ran as follows:

> J is the Jam, with the label that lies
> And says that in Paris it took the first prize;
> But out here we use it for catching the flies
> That abound in Mesopotamia.

But, if the flies are a nuisance, the mosquitos of Mesopotamia are a curse. The story is told of a Tommy who suddenly broke the stillness of a sleepless, insect-ridden night by exclaiming to his tent-mate, "Hi sy, 'Ennery, 'ow did Hadam hand Heve get hon in this bloomin' place with hall these mosquitos buzzin' habout?"

"Damned if Hi know," was the answer. "It would n't take no flamin' sword to drive me hout of the Garden of Heden."

The room that Hutchings and I occupied opened directly on the marble-paved courtyard of the hotel, which, during the tiffin hour, is crowded with Persian and Armenian rug-venders, who make life miserable with their wheedlings and importunities. One of these fellows, bearing over his arm a pair of small Bokhara carpets, edged his way into our room one torrid afternoon when we were attempting to forget the appalling heat in a siesta.

"Get the hell out of here," snapped Hutchings. "I want to go to sleep."

"I sell you ver' fine carpet, sah 'b," importuned the vender. "Ver', ver' cheap."

"What do you call cheap?" my companion demanded.

"Feefty rupee apiece," was the answer.

"I 'll give you twenty rupees for the pair," said Hutchings. "Take it or clear out."

"Eighty rupees for the two, sah 'b," the man countered.

"Twenty, I said."

"Sixty?"

"Twenty."

"Forty, please sare."

"Twenty," inexorably.

The man threw up his hands in token of defeat.

"As the sah 'b pleases," he whined, handing over the carpets, "but I make not one anna of profit."

But five minutes later he was back with another pair of Bokharas, duplicates of the first.

"These ver' fine carpet, sah 'b," he began. "I sell you heem for——"

"Twenty rupees," Hutchings interrupted.

"The sah 'b should have been a carpet merchant," said the vendor mournfully, as he pocketed his money.

One of the redeeming features of life in Baghdad is provided by the Government Book Shop, which occupies several cool and spacious rooms in the Old Serai, once the residence of the Turkish governor. This novel institution is operated by the British Ministry of Education for the purpose of providing reading-matter for the lonely exiles who in Mesopotamia are welding the rivets of empire. It corresponds very favorably with the largest book-shops of New York and London, and on its shelves may be found everything from ponderous works on scientific agriculture, in several volumes, to the latest fiction. Its rooms are crowded from the opening hour to sunset with housewives in quest of cook-books, political officers seeking works on Arab customs and the Mohammedan religion, cavalry officers looking for books on the horse and motor transport officers for volumes dealing with applied mechanics, and soldiers who wish to take back with them to their remote up-country stations a supply of fiction with which to pass their tedious existence.

The "ark of bulrushes" is still to be seen in daily use on the Tigris at Baghdad. These caldron-shaped craft, called *gouffas,* are constructed from branches of the date-palm plastered with bitumen. In the swift current of the Tigris great skill is required to guide them. If there are two boatmen, one rows one way and one the other, but if there is only one man, he must ply his oar first in one direction and then in the other; otherwise the coracle goes round and round without making any progress, so that the European passenger quickly becomes as dizzy as though he were on one of those whirling floors so familiar to those who have visited Coney Island.

Before shaking the dust of Baghdad from his feet, every visitor who has reveled in the Thousand and One Nights should make a little pilgrimage to the ancient Mohammedan cemetery which stands on the western bank of the Tigris, in the edge of the desert. At the far end of this cemetery rises a conspicuous and curious object, which appears, from a distance, to be an enormous pineapple balanced on top of a bandbox. This is the tomb of Zobeide, the favorite wife of Harun-al-Rashid. Here she lies buried, within sound of the city where she lived and laughed and loved, but her devoted husband, instead of sleeping beside her, as he would have wished, has his last resting-place a thousand miles away, beneath the great dome of the Imam Musa shrine in Meshed.

Follow the sandy highway which parallels the Tigris and, three or four miles beyond the tomb of Zobeide, you will come to the famous Mosque of Kazemain, that beautiful shining thing which is the first object to catch the eye of the traveler bound for Baghdad, no matter from what direction he approaches. Its two great domes, the five lofty minarets, and part of the façade are overlaid with gold, the gift of Shah Nasr-ed-Din of Persia, at a cost, it is said, of a pound for every brick. From all over the East pilgrims come to pray at this shrine, which is one of the most sacred spots in the Shiite world, bearing offerings which have given the mosque a colossal revenue. Christians are not permitted to enter its precincts, and the population of the Kazemain quarter is so fanatical that it is difficult and even dangerous to approach it.

Mesopotamia, or 'Iraq, to give it its new name, might be described as a kingdom which has been made to order—cut from Turkish cloth, as it were. Comprising the three former Turkish villayets of Mosul, Baghdad, and Basra, it has about the area and population of California. According to the terms of the Treaty of Sèvres (which, however, has never been ratified by Turkey), Mesopotamia was recognized as an independent state under a mandatory power, the mandate being allotted to Great Britain. Thereupon Great Britain found herself faced with the thankless and discouraging task of organizing this "independent" state; of establishing a Government which would receive the support of the people and at the same time could be depended upon to carry out British policies; and of backing up that Government with an army. The first step toward accomplishing this was taken in 1920, when a council of state was formed, as a provisional measure, to conduct the administration of the country under the supervision of Great Britain; the second in the summer of 1921, when there arrived at Basra a British cruiser bearing the Emir Feisal, who, on the twenty-fifth of August, was proclaimed by the British high commissioner King of 'Iraq.

Whether the move was a wise one, only time can tell. Though King Feisal is an Arab, as are the vast majority of his new subjects, he comes from the opposite side of the peninsula, having, in fact, never set eyes on Mesopotamia before. To complicate matters still further, his father, King Hussein of the Hedjaz, as grand sherif of Mecca, is the head of the Sunni, or orthodox, branch of Islam, while the majority of the inhabitants of 'Iraq are Shi'ahs, or dissenters, the two factions holding each other in greater detestation than they do Christians. According to the latest figures available, there are in 'Iraq 1,146,000 Sunnis and 1,494,000 Shi'ahs. I have seen it stated, let me remark in passing, that in Mesopotamia there are more sects, more gates to heaven, and more roads to hell than in America, every shade of Moslem religious opinion being represented there, every variety of Jewish belief, and more than a dozen sects of Christians, to whom must be added the Sufis and Babis of Persia, the Buddhists and Parsees of India, the Yezidees and Sabeans, all jumbled together in glorious confusion.

In order to give their puppet ruler all the trappings of royalty, the British designed for him a uniform, half Arab and half European; provided him with a court, complete from grooms to grand chamberlain; organized a body-guard of lancers in dashing uniforms; presented him with a palace, a motor-launch, and a fleet of motor-cars; raised, drilled, and equipped a miniature army; and designed a flag, a set of postage-stamps, and an order of knighthood. The latter, I was told, was to be called the Order of the Lamp, which, in view of the fact that the country's chief source of revenue is its oil-fields, seemed highly appropriate.

I had brought with me from Damascus letters to King Feisal from certain of his Syrian adher·

ents, and, presumably because he wished to learn from an unprejudiced observer how things were going in Syria under the French mandate, he sent me word by an official of his household that he would like to meet me. The audience took place in the Serai, formerly the palace of the Turkish governor, a large and rambling structure standing on the bank of the Tigris and distinguished rather for extent than grandeur. After a brief wait in a spacious anteroom, where Arab staff-officers in British uniforms, frock-coated officials of the household, and bearded mullahs in flowing robes and snowy turbans conversed in undertones as they sat on the low divans, I was ushered into the cabinet of the king—a small room, furnished like an office, its windows overlooking the muddy, swiftly flowing river. From behind a large, flat-topped desk there rose to receive me a slender, dark-bearded man in the middle thirties, a man with frank, pleasant eyes and a peculiarly winning smile. I recognized him at once from his pictures; it was his Majesty Feisal I, King of 'Iraq and Prince of Arabia. Instead of the picturesque and becoming Arab dress which he usually affects in public, he wore a khaki service-uniform with scarlet tabs, evidently patterned on that of a British field-marshal, and on a table rested his head-dress, a curious combination of the Arab *keffieh* and *agal* and the British helmet. King Feisal is one of the handsomest Orientals that I have ever seen, with the straight limbs, small hips, and slender hands of the high-caste Arab. His skin is a clear olive; his eyes are as large and lustrous as a woman's; and, unlike most Arabs, his features, when he is engaged in conversation, reflect great animation. His arched, distinctly Semitic nose, his high cheek-bones, and the fashion in which he trims his beard give him a most striking resemblance to those ancient rulers whose effigies appear on Babylonian tablets and coins. And, when you come to think of it, he *is* the successor of that long line of sovereigns—Sargon, Sennacherib, Nebuchadnezzar, Harun-al-Rashid, to name but a few—who once ruled in this land. But, unless I am vastly mistaken, he would willingly exchange his historic throne, and the galling restrictions which his British guardians have thrown about it, for a black tent on the desert and the care-free life of a nomad.

It is a curious fact that in Britain's policy in Mesopotamia and Arabia is to be found the key to the international political situation in Europe. It is a far cry from the Tigris to the Ruhr, but it cannot be denied that the happenings on the one have had their repercussion in the other. Had England not placed an obscure Arab prince, an avowed enemy of France, on the throne of 'Iraq, thereby menacing French rule in Syria, France would not have concluded a treaty with the Turkish Nationalists and would not have withdrawn her troops from the Dardanelles after the annihilation of the Greek armies in Asia Minor by Mustapha Kemal. And, if France had not thus abandoned her former ally, leaving her to oppose the advance of the victorious Turks alone, it is a reasonable supposition that England's attitude toward the French occupation of the Ruhr would have been different. In order that my readers may understand the complicated and dangerous situation which exists in the Middle East to-day, I will venture to digress from my narrative long enough to sketch briefly the "inside" story of the Mesopotamian muddle.

Listen first, then, to the solemn opening sentences of the Anglo-French Declaration of November 8, 1918:

"The end which France and Great Britain have in view in their prosecution in the East of the war let loose by German ambition is the complete and definitive liberation of the peoples so long oppressed by the Turks and the establishment of

national Governments and administrations drawing their authority from the initiative and free choice of indigenous populations.

"In order to give effect to these intentions France and Great Britain are agreed to encourage and assist the establishment of indigenous Governments and administrations in Syria and Mesopotamia."

Now, there had arisen in England during the war a new school of Arab enthusiasts. Just as Germany had her distinguished Gaelic scholars and her Orientalists who genuinely believed in the immediate possibility of creating an Irish republic and of bringing about an Indian rebellion, so England had her Pan-Arab party, fired by the dream of an Arab empire carved from the flanks of Turkey. And this despite the warning of Miss Gertrude Bell, one of the foremost authorities on Arab character and politics, and at present adviser on Arab affairs to the British high commissioner in 'Iraq, who wrote of Turk and Arab in the following terms in her book, "The Desert and the Sown":

> And yet, for all his [the Turk's] failure, there is no one who would obviously be fitted to take his place. For my immediate purpose I speak only of Syria, the province with which I am most familiar. Of what value are the pan-Arabic associations

> and the inflammatory leaflets that they issue from foreign printing presses? The answer is easy: they are worth nothing at all. There is no nation of Arabs; the Syrian merchant is separated by a wider gulf from the Bedouin than he is from the Osmanli, the Syrian country is inhabited by Arabic-speaking races all eager to be at each other's throats, and only prevented from fulfilling their natural desires by the ragged half-fed soldier who draws at rare intervals the Sultan's pay.

This opinion as to the impossibility of creating an Arab nationality was included by Miss Bell in her new edition of October, 1918, and has been reprinted since the Armistice; so it may be taken as representing her view until, at least, very recent times. But the exigencies of the war compelled the British to ignore such sane reminders of obvious facts. The Turks were Britain's enemies, and nothing was more natural, therefore, than that the British should seek to turn to the military advantage of the Allies every handle afforded by the Turks' misgovernment of their empire.

The first step in the scheme was the setting up of an Arab caliphate in order to weaken the prestige enjoyed by the sultan of Turkey throughout the Moslem world by virtue of his position as caliph of Islam. And a candidate for the Arab caliphate was ready to hand in the person of Hussein, the grand sherif of Mecca. He was known throughout Islam as a wealthy man, who derived a large revenue from the annual pilgrimage to the Holy Places, but it cannot be said that this reputation had popularized him to people outside the circle of his own followers, for the merciless fleecing of the pilgrims by the officials of Mecca and Medina had long been an open scandal throughout the Moslem world. Whether he conceived the grandiose plan for making himself caliph and the head of a new Arab empire which should include all Arab lands, and even some which were not Arab at all, or whether it was suggested to him by others, is of no moment. It was enough that the plan made a powerful appeal to the officials of the Arab Bureau, which had been established in Cairo as a war measure, who saw in it eminently good business for Britain, not only during the war but afterward. In support of this roseate dream the gentlemen of the Arab Bureau adduced the most learned and historically correct arguments both to prove that the sultan of Turkey had no hereditary title to the caliphate, being a mere parvenu in Islam, and to bolster up the claims of the grand sherif which were based on his assertion of direct descent from the Prophet and the fact that he was an Arab, as was Mohammed. It was, in other words, a shrewd and daring scheme on the part of Britain to split the Moslem world by giving it two caliphates, thereby shattering the solidarity of Islam. But in its enthusiasm the Arab Bureau went to greater lengths than the home Government ever intended. To flatter the grand sherif it addressed him, presumably without reflection, as "king." Now a king, as Sir Percy Cox is said to have remarked when he heard of it, implies a kingdom. Hussein was evidently of the same mind, for shortly thereafter he began signing himself, in his letters to the British, as "King of the Arab Lands." This cool assumption of a title to which he had no shadow of claim was so bitterly resented by Ibn Sa'ud, the powerful emir of Nejd, that the Arab Bureau hastened to hedge by addressing Hussein as "King of the Hedjaz."

It was about this time that Colonel Lawrence appeared upon the scene. This young man, who, upon the outbreak of the war, was an Orientalist at Oxford, quickly became the life and soul of the Shereefian movement against the Turks. Possessing a magnetic personality and a deep sympathy with the Arab, and provided by the British Government with an apparently bottomless purse, he became a close friend of King Hussein's handsome and picturesque son, the Emir Feisal. Together they raided the Damascus-Medina railway, held by the Turks, and later organized a solid Arab advance northward, ultimately becoming General Allenby's extreme right wing beyond the

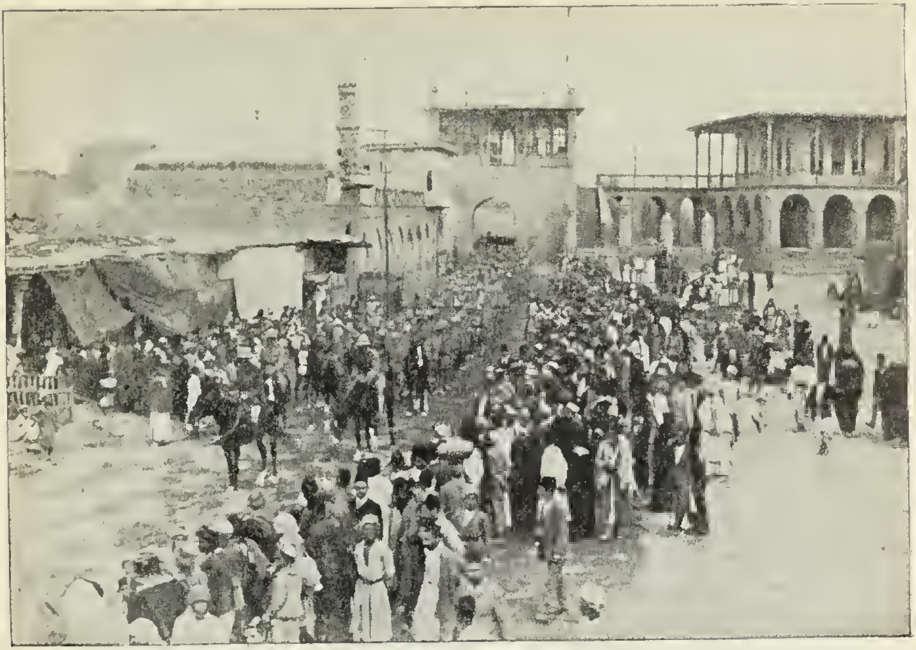
Jordan. At Damascus, in April, 1920, Feisal had himself crowned "King of Syria," and his brother Abdullah, now emir of Transjordania, was hailed as "King of Mesopotamia." But, owing to Feisal's refusal to accept the guidance of France, which was the mandatory power in Syria, he and his brother were ignominiously expelled from the country, his Arab troops being smashed by a few French battalions in a single afternoon and he himself making his escape to Palestine in a freight-car. It is scarcely necessary to add that this made the whole Shereefian clan inveterate enemies of France.

Despite the failure of their scheme for placing Feisal on the throne of Syria, the Pan-Arabists did not despair. They next conceived a scheme for finding a throne for their protégé in Mesopotamia, and, incidentally, for making his younger brother, Said, king of Kurdistan. The plans which centered around Feisal they eventually succeeded in putting over, but, owing to the determined opposition of the Kurds, the scheme for installing Said as a ruler at Diarbekr ended in a fizzle. In 1920, as a direct result, it has been alleged, of these Pan-Arabist intrigues and machinations, there broke out in Mesopotamia a serious revolt which imperiled Baghdad and cost many British lives. Shortly thereafter the British high commissioner, Sir Arnold Wilson, was succeeded by Sir Percy Cox, the present incumbent, who, as the result of a lifetime spent in Arab lands, is known as "Cokkos" to the Arabs from the shores of the Indian Ocean to the Kurdish mountains. Publicly and solemnly he committed himself to the policy of thenceforward leaving Mesopotamia to settle its own destiny as it saw fit. By the adoption of this wise and broad-minded policy he secured from the outset the support of the Nakib of Baghdad, which was vital to him. Without this venerable old man, the greatest and most respected Arab of the city, he could not have formed his Provisional Government, of which the Nakib became premier. The Nakib had profound faith in "Cokkos." He accepted the post as head of the new Government on the distinct understanding that an electoral law would forthwith be prepared and published and that a national assembly would be convened to draw up a constitution. It was generally admitted that, should Mesopotamia decide for a ruler chosen from within its own borders, the Nakib would be selected, and this the Nakib knew. Seyyid Talib, the greatest notable of Basra and a bold, ambitious man, to whom the British had sent an urgent appeal for help during the rebellion of 1920 and who had come to the support of the beleaguered garrison of Baghdad in its desperate need, accepted the post of minister of the interior on the same understanding.

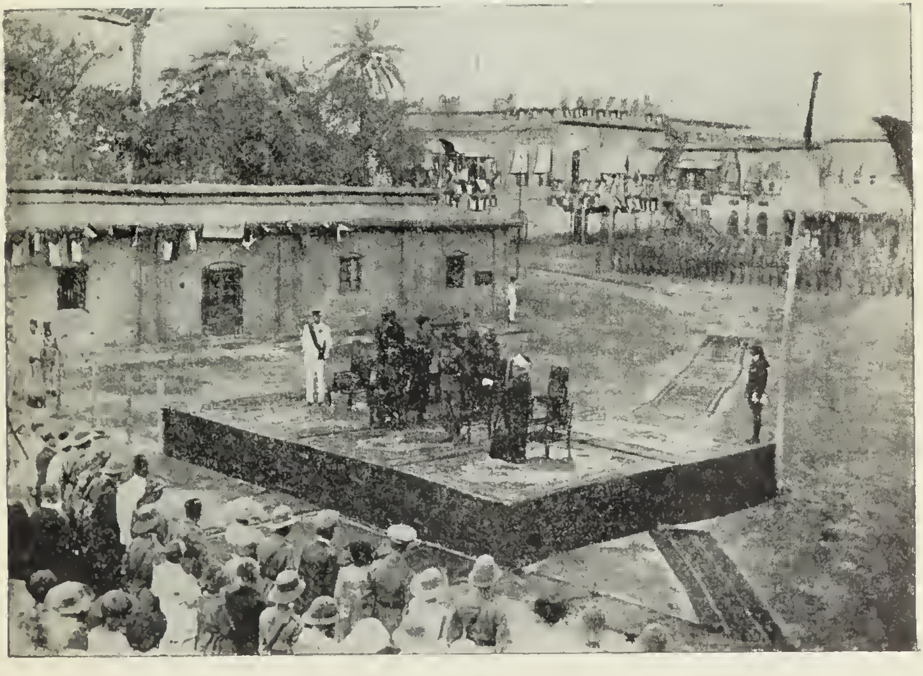
Meanwhile Mr. Winston Churchill had become minister of the colonies and a Middle-Eastern Department, of which Colonel Lawrence was appointed adviser, had been created in the British Colonial Office. From that moment the campaign which the Pan-Arabists had been waging was won, though it is only fair to say that for a time Sir Percy Cox remained ignorant of the change in the policy of the home Government and continued to work on the promised electoral law and to dream of national assemblies and autonomy. Then came the summons to the Cairo Conference, held in the Egyptian capital in March, 1921. This conference, which was dominated by the dictatorial personality of Mr. Churchill, decided, despite the protests of Sir Percy Cox, that a Shereefian ruler was necessary for Mesopotamia and that the Emir Feisal was the man. Finding that the conference was deaf to his pleas to keep faith with the people of Mesopotamia, Sir Percy Cox, taking another tack, reminded the colonial minister of the dangerous position in which Ibn Sa'ud, the ruler of Nejd, who had shown himself a stanch friend of the British, would find himself if encircled by his hereditary enemies, King Hussein in Mecca, the Emir Abdullah in Amman, and King Feisal in

Baghdad. But the conferees, recalling perhaps Miss Bell's reference to "the Arab with his eye fixed unblinkingly on the main chance," asserted that Ibn Sa'ud's neutrality could be bought with British gold and promised that the British taxpayer would find sixty thousand pounds a year for him provided he remained at peace with the Hedjaz, Transjordania, and 'Iraq.

It was generally admitted that, if elections were held, Feisal would not stand a ghost of a chance. It was decided, therefore, to first send him into the country in the hope that his pleasing personality would create a favorable impression with the population. The conference broke up and Sir Percy Cox returned to Baghdad. News spreads with amazing rapidity in the East, and rumors soon began to circulate through the bazaars of Basra, Baghdad, and Mosul that the British were planning to bring Feisal to Mesopotamia and thrust him on its inhabitants as their ruler without so much as a by-your-leave, and that the promised elections were not to be held. Smooth official assurances denied both these statements, however, and even in June, when the emir had already embarked at Jiddah on the *Northbrook,* the British authorities pleaded ignorance of the fact. The alarming rumors reaching the ears of the Nakib and Seyyid Talib, they hastened to Sir Percy Cox



The entry of General Maude's forces into Baghdad on March 11, 1917.



The proclamation of the Emir Feisal as King of 'Iraq on August 25, 1921.

A portion of a herd of fifty thousand camels on the upper Euphrates.

for enlightenment, and were again assured that nothing would be done to influence Mesopotamia's free choice of a ruler. But Seyyid Talib became suspicious of British sincerity. At a dinner which he gave in his own house in April, after drinking more wine than was good for him, he declared that the people of Mesopotamia would never accept Feisal as their ruler, and denounced certain British officers who were working in his behalf as disloyal to the Arab administration which employed them. These remarks, which, though indiscreet, were certainly not disloyal, were promptly reported to the British authorities by one of Talib's English guests. Sir Percy Cox decided, therefore, that, if the policy decided upon at Cairo was to be carried out, the iron hand must be employed, and employed ruthlessly.

And now occurred one of the most shameful episodes in the whole story of British rule in Mesopotamia, an episode which involved the grossest breach of the law of hospitality—a law which, even in the case of an enemy, every Arab respects—and provided Britain's enemies with ample proof of their charges of British ingratitude, insincerity, and bad faith. It so happened that Seyyid Talib had been invited to take tea with Lady Cox at Government House in the afternoon. This gave the military authorities the very opportunity they were seeking, for there is only one practicable route to Government House, a comparatively unfrequented road running between walls and gardens. The unsuspecting minister of the interior duly took tea with his friend, Lady Cox, who, it is to be assumed, had been kept in ignorance of the plot. The high commissioner himself was opportunely absent at the races, for Baghdad was having its "week" in celebration of the fourth anniversary of the entry of General Maude's forces. When Seyyid Talib left the residency in his car he found an army-truck standing crossways of the road, about fifty yards from the entrance, and was compelled to stop, whereupon he was placed under arrest by a British intelligence officer. Two hours later he was in a special train rushing him southward to a waiting steamer at Basra. Before he could recover from his amazement at this astounding breach of hospitality and good faith he was on the high seas, speeding to Ceylon, where he is now eating out his heart in exile. Thus fell a minister in Mesopotamia's first cabinet, who had taught himself English, whose two sons were being educated in England, who believed implicitly in English faith and honor, and who, whatever his motives might have been, had stood by England in an hour of great peril, thereby saving the lives of many Englishmen.[1] That is why those who are familiar with the inside history of England's occupation of Mesopotamia smiled cynically when they read, in the reports from the Lausanne Conference, of Lord Curzon's high-souled declaration that England would never consent to surrender the Mosul oil-fields to the Turks because to do so would be to break the solemn pledges which she had given to the Arabs of 'Iraq and to imperil British honor!

If intimidation was what the British aimed at, their coup had the desired effect, for the Nakib was terrified and Mesopotamia trembled. Yet when Feisal landed at Basra a few weeks later he received a welcome as chilly as a winter's morning in the Arctic. His tour to the sacred shrines of Nejif and Kerbela was a similar failure, and he was for the most part met by stony silence.

After the kidnapping of the most influential cabinet minister it was easy for the Pan-Arab faction to force Feisal on 'Iraq. The British Government, again in contradiction of its pledges, decided that a republic could not be permitted in Mesopotamia, though, in the opinion of many well informed men, 'Iraq would certainly have voted for a republic had it been given the promised opportunity to freely express its choice. In order to provide a cloak of decency for their real intentions, the British arranged a sham consultation of public opinion, by means of which the leading sheikhs and notables were asked whether they would accept Feisal for their constitutional ruler. In view of Talib's fate, it was not to be expected that any Arab who valued his liberty would answer "No" to such a question. And it was common knowledge that, once Feisal was in power, every one who had opposed him either would have to fly the country or would die quite suddenly with his boots on. So no one said "No," though every one thought it; and 'Iraq at the present moment is seething with hatred for the British and their puppet ruler and with a desire for vengeance.

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[1] Lest I be charged with bias and with being anti-British, I would emphasize the fact that this account of the intrigues which resulted in placing Feisal on the throne of 'Iraq against the wishes of its inhabitants is drawn entirely from British sources. See the series of articles entitled "The Mesopotamian Mystery" which appeared in the London "Times" of December 27, 28, and 29, 1921. E.A.P.

Now it must be kept in mind that both Feisal, whom the British thrust upon Mesopotamia, and Abdullah, whom they have set up in Transjordania, are *personæ ingratæ* to France. Both of them hate the French and do not hesitate to say so to all comers. Their aim is the creation of a great Arab empire which will include Baghdad, Diarbekr, Aleppo, Damascus, and Jerusalem, as well as the Hedjaz and central Arabia. They hope to smash Zionism in Palestine, subjugate Ibn Sa'ud in Nejd, and drive the French out of Syria. And in this scheme they have a by no means inconsiderable number of English official and unofficial sympathizers, both in England and the East.

America wondered why France supported the Turkish Nationalists against England. The answer is to be found in England's support of Feisal, an avowed enemy of the French. France had to come to an understanding with the Turks in order to insure the safety of her Syrian frontier, which was threatened by Feisal and his adherents. The British, who pay Ibn Sa'ud of Nejd a subsidy of sixty thousand pounds a year, think him lacking in gratitude because he is reported to have concluded a secret treaty with the French authorities in Syria. Here again the explanation is to be found in Britain's support of the Shereefian family, which on three sides surrounds the territory of Ibn Sa'ud and is constantly committing aggressions against him. It is a curious fact, when you stop to think about it, that the steadily widening cleavage between Great Britain and France in the Near East is not due so much to any divergence of their respective policies, or to any desire on the part of the French for further territorial aggrandizement in those regions, but to England's short-sightedness in lending encouragement and assistance to the members of an Arab family whom France is convinced that she has every reason to distrust and fear.

When I returned to Syria I called on General Gouraud to tell him about my experiences in Mesopotamia.

"Did you meet Feisal?" was his first question.

"Yes."

"What did you think of him?"

"He impressed me," I answered, "as being a very charming gentleman."

"Charming, yes," said the general dryly. "Like this."

Approaching me, he rested his half-arm affectionately upon my shoulder; with his other hand he pretended to stab me in the back.

It is a great and audacious game that Britain is playing in western Asia, but, from the imperialistic point of view, the audacity is justified by the immensity of the stake, which is the political control of half a continent. At one period the game was so nearly won, indeed, that the officers in the Baghdad messes openly boasted that England had a straight run of land from Calcutta to the Cape of Good Hope. Had Franklin Bouillon kept away from Angora, and had Ibn Sa'ud consented to stay bought, England by now would have realized her dream of uniting India with Egypt by an Arab confederation under British influence. But, as the result of the signing by France in October, 1921, of the Accord of Angora, which released thousands of Turkish soldiers in Cilicia for operations on the Dardanelles and in Kurdistan; and the recalcitrance of Ibn Sa'ud, who is constantly threatening Hussein and Abdullah, Britain's protégés in the Hedjaz and Transjordania, the imperial structure so painstakingly reared is showing unmistakable signs of collapse. The keystone, on which everything else rests, will give way if Ibn Sa'ud and his Wahhabis succeed in capturing Mecca, as they may do at any time, and ousting Hussein from his stewardship of the Holy Places, for there will then be only one caliph—the sultan of Turkey—and England's plans for a division of Islam will have failed. If the British fail to reach an agreement with the Turkish Nationalists over the Mosul district, and Mustapha Kemal invades Mesopotamia, as he is quite prepared to do, Feisal, the third of the triumvirate of British puppet-rulers, is likely to vacate his throne with great suddenness. A united Islam will stare Europe in the face once more, and the chancelleries of London and Paris will recommence their intrigues in an attempt to appease this terrifying adversary.

It is possible, however, that the day is not far distant when both the British and the French will realize that there is no profit and much loss in these Middle-Eastern ventures, and that the natives do not really want them, though they have no objection to accepting their money. If that day of wisdom dawns, hastened as it may be by financial stringency at home and public reaction against everything that savors of imperialism, then Feisal may again have a chance to regain the throne of Syria, from which he was driven by French bayonets. But even if a situation arose in which he was no longer opposed by the French, it is difficult to imagine that he would be successful with the Arabs. For he will still have to reckon with his hereditary enemy, Ibn Sa'ud. Since the Armistice the ruler of the Wahhabis has thrice defeated the Shereefian forces, and it has been only British intervention that has prevented him from entering Mecca, which to-day lies at his mercy. That the Wahhabis are the stronger, and that they can at any time destroy the combined forces of Feisal, Abdullah, and Hussein, there seems little reason to doubt.

What are the real merits of this Pan-Arab scheme of which Feisal and his British supporters dream? What prospect is there of the Arabs of western Asia sinking their jealousies and differences and banding themselves together in an empire or confederation? Many Englishmen assert that the Turk divided Arabia, but the exact opposite is the truth. As Miss Gertrude Bell has so plainly put it, it was the Turk alone who held Arabia together. There is no Arab national consciousness which embraces simultaneously the Tigris, the Nejd, the Red Sea, and the Syrian shore. For generations to come, the tribal sentiment is likely to dominate the racial. There are as yet only groups of personal adherents, and the desire for a united Palestine, a united Syria, a united 'Iraq, much less the desire for a united Arabia, has small existence in fact.

Such, then, is the present situation in Mesopotamia. And in it there is distinct menace to the peace of Asia. Make no mistake about that. Scores of patriotic, well informed, far-seeing Englishmen have been urging that England evacuate Mesopotamia now, before she becomes more deeply involved in a situation the end of which no man can foresee. And I am convinced that the British Government would heed this advice were it not for the oil, and for the powerful influence of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company, that organization of which it is commonly said, "No one knows where the Government of Mesopotamia ends and the Anglo-Persian begins.'' But the reputed wealth in oil which has provided the British Government with a pretext for remaining in Mesopotamia, in the face of protests from the overburdened British taxpayer, may prove illusory, for I learn on excellent authority that it will be some years before it is known whether there is sufficient oil to justify the construction of the projected pipe-line from Baghdad to the Mediterranean.

Viewing the situation from an unprejudiced standpoint, it seems to me that the game is hardly worth the candle, or, to phrase it more aptly, that it is hardly worth the oil. England's support of Feisal, as I have already shown, has gone far toward losing her the friendship of France and has alienated the native population. By the payment of huge subsidies she has purchased the temporary neutrality of the Arab rulers of the hinterland, but they are likely to break loose at any moment. Though she has spent millions in agricultural and reclamation projects, and other public improvements, the people of Mesopotamia dislike and distrust her. And, if the Turks decide to retake Mosul, or, indeed, the whole of Mesopotamia, England can only prevent them at the cost of another war, with the incalculable expenditure in lives and gold which a campaign in such a region would involve. 'Iraq, with hostile desert tribes on the south and west, with hostile Turks and hostile Kurds on the north, with a suspicious and unfriendly Persia on the east, and with a discontented and rebellious population, is a difficult country to hold, as the British have already discovered. The truth of the matter is that the vast majority of the country's inhabitants want the Turks back, for they are, after all, their coreligionists, and it will be well for the peace of this troubled region when they come.

CHAPTER VII

ACROSS THE LAND OF THE LION AND THE SUN

FROM Baghdad North to Tiaruq, which is the name of the rail-head on the Persian frontier, is only about one hundred and twenty miles, but the journey takes from 6 P.M. of one day to the following noon. This works out at about six and a half miles an hour, which gives the Mesopotamian railways the distinction of operating what is probably the slowest train on earth. The rolling-stock consists of carriages discarded by the Indian railways; judging from their condition, they must have seen their best days when Victoria was still on the throne. The carriages are divided into two compartments, each of which contains four leather-covered lounges, the two upper ones being hooked up out of the way when not in use. The passengers provide their own bedding and insect-powder. Attached to the train is a "restaurant-carriage," as it is called by courtesy, which is in reality nothing but a box-car stocked with beer, soft drinks of various kinds, tinned biscuits, and cucumbers, the last being a favorite article of food in this thirsty land, where every one munches them as they do apples at home.

Though the line from Baghdad to Tiaruq runs across a sandy and monotonous waste, broken here and there by *nullahs,* or gullies, we found it interesting because of the measures for defense against Bedouin raids which were everywhere apparent. The stations consisted of small blockhouses of adobe, encircled by systems of trenches and barbed wire, with machine-guns mounted on their roofs. Close by each station a small detachment of 'Iraq gendarmerie was encamped, and at one or two points on the line battalions of beturbaned Indian soldiery were living under canvas. When the train stopped at night at the lonely desert stations I could make out the dim figures of troopers of the camel corps outlined against the stars, and now and then smart-looking 'Iraqian officers in *keffiehs* and khaki, spurs, bandoliers, and pistol jingling, would stride briskly along the train. There was an air of suppressed excitement about it all which showed that the danger of attack was by no means imaginary, and which brought home to us in vivid fashion the thrills of railway travel during Indian days on our own plains.

Barring a four-mile-long tin-pot line which carries religious pilgrims from Tehran to a suburban shrine, and the branch of the Russian system which has been pushed across the Trancaucasian border as far as Tabriz, there are no railways in Persia, so that all travel in that country is, perforce, by car, carriage, or caravan. One cannot depend upon finding cars at Tiaruq—there is nothing there, indeed, but a cluster of tents and a miserable adobe hovel which serves as the railway-station—so, on the advice of Owens, the American consul in Baghdad, we had telegraphed to Dr. Packard, the head of the American mission station at Kermanshah, requesting him to have two cars meet us at rail-head. To depend upon the missionaries to make arrangements has become a recognized custom among Americans proceeding to Persia, for in that country the ubiquitous tourist agent is still unknown. And there is no trouble to which Dr. Packard and his colleagues throughout the shah's dominions will not put themselves for travelers, particularly Americans. They not only entertained us in their homes for many days at a time, often at great inconvenience to themselves, but they engaged motor-cars for us, and hired drivers, and arranged for supplies of oil and petrol, and cashed checks, and, in short, performed the countless services for which, in civilized countries, one turns to the American Express Company and Thomas Cook & Son.

We found awaiting us at Tiaruq, therefore, the two cars (Fords, of course) which Dr. Packard had sent down. The driver of one of them was a Chaldean who spoke a few words of English; the other was piloted by a Russian refugee—a former colonel of engineers—who spoke only French. Of all the men that I have known in many parts of the world, I can recall no finer gentleman than this fugitive Russian. At the outbreak of the war he had been a professor in the Imperial Military College in Tiflis, and, during the earlier stages of the great conflict, he had served with distinction in the campaign against the Turks. But, when Bolshevism broke loose and red ruin swept the land, he, like thousands of other imperial officers, was forced to fly for his life. With his wife and two small children he escaped from Tiflis between two days and eventually succeeded in making his way to Tehran. But the Persian capital was already packed to its doors with Russian refugees, for the great majority of whom no employment could be found, and for a time the colonel, who had committed no other crime than that of being a gallant soldier and a loyal servant of the czar, was face to face with starvation. He managed, however, to scrape together a few hundred tomans, with which he purchased an antediluvian and decrepit Ford, by means of which he ekes out a precarious existence by transporting passengers between Tiaruq and Tehran, and between Tehran and Enzeli, on the Caspian. Though his home in Tiflis had been confiscated by the Bolshevists; though he had had no direct word from his mother and brothers in Russia in four years and was not even certain that they were still alive; though his wife had fled to India with a British officer, leaving him to bring up and educate their two small children; though the wounds that he had received in battle made him physically unfit for manual labor; and though he often did not know where the next day's breakfast was coming from, I never heard him utter a word of complaint. More than that, he always kept smiling. A pathetic figure, but a heroic one.

It is in the neighborhood of four hundred miles from the rail-head in Mesopotamia to Tehran, and, considering that the road was used during the war for the transport of the British, Turkish, and Russian armies, that in two places it climbs to a height of more than eight thousand feet, and that the portion which traverses Kurdistan is infested with brigands, it is in surprisingly good condition. In fact, I have seen many worse roads in New England. Motoring in Persia is an extremely costly form of travel. The hire of the two cars came to seven hundred tomans (nearly six hundred dollars at the then prevailing rate of exchange), while petrol ranged in price from two and a half tomans to nearly six tomans a gallon. Between the rail-head and the capital there are fully a score of tollhouses, the toll amounting to approximately one hundred tomans per car each way, though, thanks to a *laissez-passer* given me by the Persian consul-general at Baghdad, we were exempted from the payment of tolls both coming and going. On only one occasion was this document disputed. At Sultanabad the sullen-looking gate-keeper refused to let us pass until we paid, and, by way of enforcing his decision, ordered a soldier to unsling his rifle and prevent the wooden beam that barred the road from being raised. Now, it would have been easier, no doubt, to have paid the comparatively small sum demanded and go on our way without further argument. But in Persia, once you have taken a position with a native, you must stick to it, no matter what it costs; otherwise your prestige as a European disappears instantly and completely. So, in a very ill humor indeed, I clambered out of the car and went in search of the *kalantar,* or mayor, of the town. After picking my way for nearly a mile through filth-strewn alleys, under a sun that must have registered one hundred and twenty in the shade, I found him. He was at his prayers, and, impatient though I was to get on, I knew enough not to disturb him. When he had finished his devotions I broached my troubles, but he would not listen to them until tea had been served. Finally he consented to look at my papers, only to shake his head mournfully and say that he would have to take the matter up with the governor of the district before he could give a decision.

"But I am a friend of the shah," I protested. (This was distinctly an exaggeration; I had merely spent an hour or so with his Majesty in Paris.) "He will be very angry when he hears of the treatment you have accorded to Americans."

"Is the sah'b an American?" the *kalantar* demanded, his attitude changing as though by magic from ill-concealed insolence to profound respect. "Why did not the sah'b so inform me in the first place? I had supposed him to be an Inglesi. That alters everything. Perhaps the sah'b knows Shuster sah'b, the great American whom the Inglesi sent away because he was Persia's friend? Yes? Then I am at the sah'b's command. Where is this miserable son of a toad who dared to annoy Americans? Let the sah'b lead me to him. Before the sun sets his miserable feet shall feel the bastinado."

Judging from the *kalantar's* temper, I imagine that it was some days before that gate-keeper was able to hobble around without considerable pain. He probably won't be so brash to Americans the next time.

We enjoyed the novel and picturesque experience of traveling from Baghdad to Tehran with the crown prince of Persia, or, as he is commonly called, the Valiahd, who was returning to his country after a year's stay in Europe. By this I do not mean to imply that we were attached to the entourage of his Royal Highness, but his saloon-carriage was attached to the train by which we traveled from Baghdad to Tiaruq, and on the road between the rail-head and Tehran we passed and repassed each other so many times that, long before the capital was reached, we were nodding and waving at each other like old friends. The Valiahd, who received us formally at the palace later on, is a nice-looking, rather stout, pleasant-mannered youth in the early twenties. He was accompanied by a considerable suite and had with him several large and costly motor-cars, including a most luxuriously fitted Rolls-Royce, which he had brought from Europe to use on the roads around Tehran. Word of his coming had preceded him, and at every city, town, and hamlet through which we passed triumphal arches, covered with priceless carpets and bedecked with countless flags bearing the device of the lion and the sun, had been erected, and elaborate preparations made for his reception. If the crown prince partook of all the banquets which were awaiting him along the route, without suffering any ill effects, he must have the digestion of an ostrich.

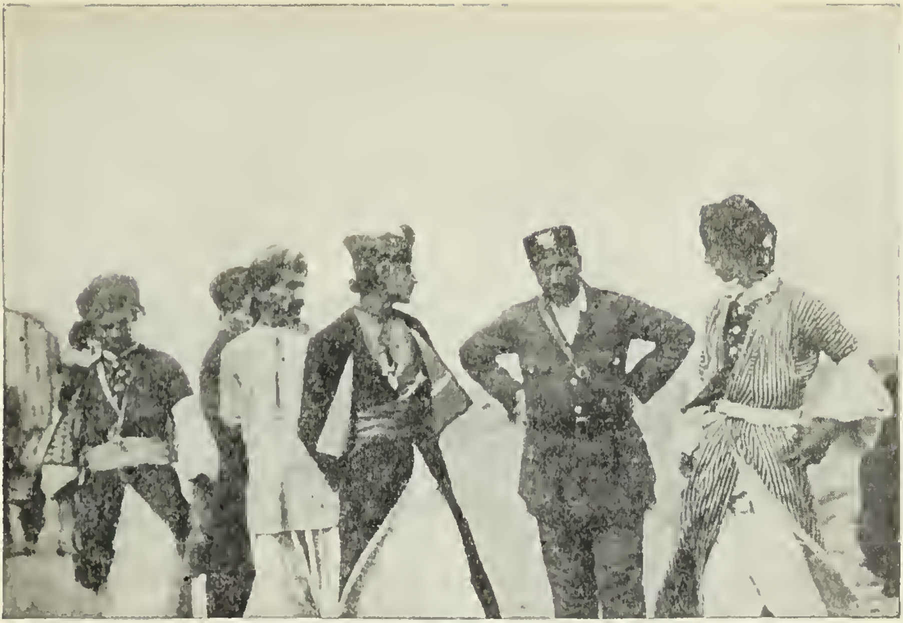
We noticed that at the entrance to every town an animal, usually a sheep or a cow, carefully groomed and usually bedecked with beads and ribbons, was in waiting. In our ignorance we assumed that these were intended as gifts for the Valiahd, who, we figured, would be able to stock a farm by the time he arrived at the capital; but it developed, upon investigation, that the beasts were intended for sacrifice, in accordance with an ancient Persian custom. For in Persia, when a friend returns from a long journey, or when a bride arrives at her new home, it is customary to celebrate the event by decapitating an animal, the person thus honored passing between the body and the severed head. It is a well-intentioned custom, doubtless, but, to a foreigner, not a pleasant one. Personally, I prefer that any slaughtering that may be necessary shall be performed in the abattoir and not on my door-step. But *autres pays, autres mœurs.*

Beneath each of the arches was drawn up a reception-committee composed of the local notables, dignified elders wearing long embroidered robes and caps of black lambskin, and sometimes there was a band. As the great cloud of dust stirred up by our cars was seen approaching, wild excitement stirred the assembled multitudes. The line of waiting notables salaamed almost to the ground; school-children, ranged in double ranks, waved small flags and cheered vociferously; and the bands burst into a weird refrain which, we assumed, was the imperial anthem. Ladew, who, with his black hair and mustache and his olive skin, might well be taken for an Oriental, would salute gravely, whereupon the cheering increased in volume. It was not until the dust-clouds had dissipated sufficiently to reveal the distinctly plebeian character of our vehicles that the waiting Persians realized their mistake. These premature demonstrations were so enthusiastic, however, that the arrival of the Valiahd himself must have been a distinct anticlimax.

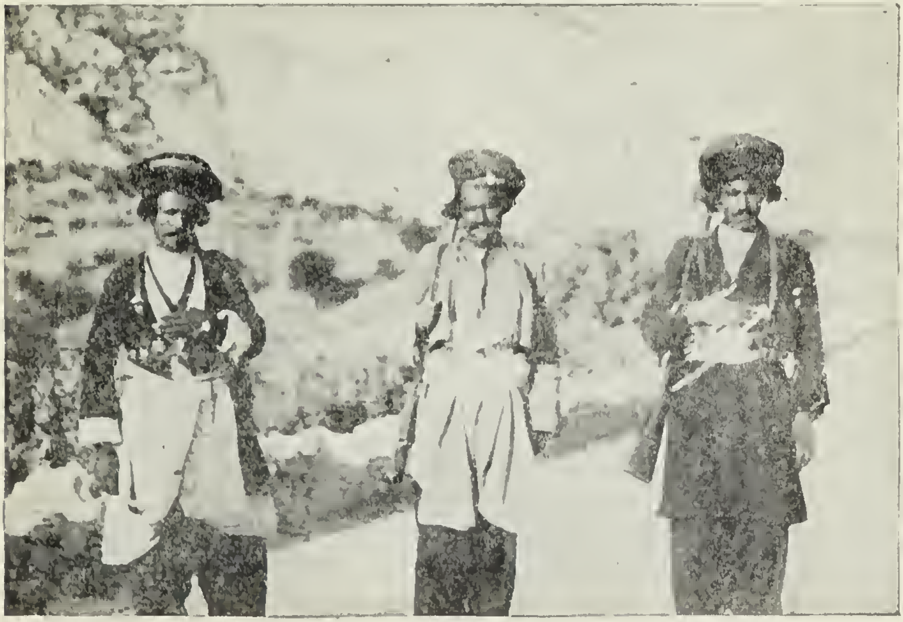
The afternoon was already well advanced before we had completed the formalities at the Kasr-i-Shirin custom-house, and darkness was upon us before we reached Kirin. The Valiahd had arrived before us, and the little town was filled to overflowing with the members of his entourage and the officials from round about who had come in to greet him. Fortunately, I bore a letter of introduction from the Persian minister in Washington to the governor of Kirin. Though flustered and preoccupied with the responsibilities incident to the entertainment of the royal party, the governor did his best to make us as comfortable for the night as the crowded condition of the town would permit, placing at our disposal a portion of the second-story gallery, or veranda, which overlooked the courtyard of the local serai, all of whose rooms were occupied by the crown prince and his entourage. At the governor's command the floor was covered with matting and carpets, beds and bedding appeared as at the wave of a magician's wand, and, as a final touch to his hospitality, there was set before us an enormous dish of *pilau,* resembling a curry of rice and meat, which, it appeared, had been sent from the prince's own table. A sentry was posted at the foot of the stairway leading to our balcony to keep off intruders, and, despite the noise, the smells, and the battalions of sand-flies and mosquitoes, we did not suffer from insomnia. The Persian soldiers in their tunics of faded blue and their huge and shaggy caps of sheepskin, the Kurdish attendants with their weapon-filled girdles and their curious black *kolas,* the camels and horses, the smoldering cooking-fires in the courtyard below, all these served to make for ever memorable our first night in the Land of the Lion and the Sun. For, after all, it is the first impressions that remain longest with one.

Just a word here about the caravanserais, so frequently mentioned in books on Persia. Many a time I have had friends exclaim, "How I envy you the experience of sleeping in a caravanserai! They must be *so* picturesque and interesting." Now, I don't like to destroy illusions, but I might as well state that I have never passed a night in a caravanserai if it was safe or practicable to sleep in a blanket on the ground. A caravanserai is, as its name implies, a public building for the shelter of caravans and wayfarers generally. It is quadrangular in form, with a dead wall outside, usually loopholed for musketry, and, inside, a two-storied cloister-like arcade, which gives access to cellular store-rooms below and to rows of small sleeping-rooms above, runs entirely around it. A gateway, high and wide enough to permit the passage of a loaded camel, forms the sole entrance, which is provided with heavy, iron-barred doors. The courtyard itself is generally paved with cobbles, and in some cases is large enough to admit of several hundred kneeling camels or tethered mules, the bales of merchandise being piled away in the store-rooms. The courtyard, where the cooking is carried on over open fires or charcoal braziers, is always indescribably filthy; the bare walls of the rooms are blackened with smoke; the bare floors littered with the leavings of previous occupants. One has to have an overpowering passion for the picturesque to disregard the grunting of the camels, the braying of the donkeys, the interminable chatter of the guards and cameleers, the acrid smell of wood smoke, the stench of sweat-soaked leather and unwashed human bodies, and particularly the highly objectionable activities of a small insect, well known to caravanserais, which in Persia bears the significant name of *gharib-gas,* or "biter of strangers." The traveler in Persia who finds himself caught out at night between mission stations will do well to roll himself in his blankets and spend the night on the bosom of Mother Earth.

I never realized before I went there how high Persia is propped up above the rest of the world, or that part of the world lying to the west of it, or how difficult a matter it is to get into or out of it. On the Mesopotamian side there is only one place where it can be done—the eight-thousand-foot Paitok Pass, through which the road from Baghdad and the south crosses the Zagros ranges on its way to Tehran and beyond. Before the Great War it was little more than a caravan trail, impracticable for anything save mules and camels,



The old order changeth. An officer of the 'Iraq gendarmerie with a group of curious Kurds and Arabs at the rail-head at Tiaruq.



Three Kurdish Captain Kidds whom we encountered in the Paitok Pass. Their high black *kolas* were bound about their foreheads with scarves of gaudy silk, buccaneer fashion.

A caravanserai on the road to Kermanshah. A caravanserai is a public building for the shelter of caravans and wayfarers generally, its courtyard frequently being large enough to admit of several hundred kneeling camels or tethered mules.

Persia and Mesopotamia being, for the most part, treeless lands, the chief fuel is camel-dung, which is made into cakes resembling loaves of bread, piles of which are seen outside of every village. The making of these cakes is the task usually assigned to the brides.

but when, in 1917, Britain despatched to North Persia an expedition under General Dunsterville —known as the "Dunsterforce"—in an attempt to take the Turks in the rear and relieve the pressure against the demoralized Russians, this historic highway, which had shaken in turn beneath the tramp of the legions of Cyrus and Darius, of Xerxes and Alexander, was repaired and broadened, forming, in fact, General Dunsterville's only line of communications.

The road is in reality a ladder, leading from the plains beside the Tigris to the lofty Iranian plateau; and it is a ladder which requires a cool head and a steady hand on the steering-wheel to negotiate in safety, for it is none too wide at best, while in places it is merely a narrow shelf blasted from the face of the rock. The signs erected by the British—"*Danger! Test Your Brakes!*"—still admonish the traveler, and, if these warnings are not sufficient, he has only to peer over the brink of the dizzy precipice to see the twisted and rusting skeletons of scores of motor vehicles strewing the rocky slopes below. Between the rail-head and Hamadan we passed at least a dozen great motor cemeteries, where the thousands of cars, camions, and ambulances used by the British in their northward advance, and no longer fit for service, have been assembled, stripped of all that was worth salvaging, and abandoned. Fully nine tenths of the cars used on the Mesopotamian and Persian fronts were manufactured in Detroit. I don't remember the exact number, but it was something incredible—far up in the tens of thousands. In fact, I was told by a British general in Baghdad that Britain could never have won the Mesopotamian campaign had it not been for Henry Ford.

We had been warned, before leaving Kasr-i-Shirin, that in the pass we might encounter brigands; so we were not taken by surprise, upon rounding a shoulder of the cliff, to see, perched on a great rock which commanded the road, a trio of ruffianly-looking Kurds leaning on their rifles. Their high black *kolas* were bound about their foreheads with scarfs of gaudy silk, buccaneer fashion, their resemblance to the late Captain Kidd being completed by the suggestive handles of ivory, wood, and silver which protruded from their bulging girdles. The top of our car was up, so that they could not see us, and I imagine that they supposed they had only a party of terrified natives to deal with, for, when the car stopped short and four helmeted *ferinjees* sprang out briskly, the butts of businesslike automatics peeping from their holsters, the astonishment and chagrin of these Kurdish Robin Hoods was positively ludicrous. When they had recovered their self-possession they scrambled down from their rock and salaamed profoundly and wished us peace and explained that they were guarding the pass and protecting strangers like ourselves from bandits. They were so naïve about it all, and so obviously disappointed at having drawn a blank, that after they had posed for a picture I bestowed a few krans upon each of them, whereupon they salaamed again and called down upon us the blessings of Allah. I think that Sherin was disappointed that the episode ended so tamely, for he had spent four years as a gun-layer on the western front and was secretly hankering for excitement.

In traveling across northern Persia you should plan to break your journey at the American mission stations at Kermanshah and Hamadan. We imposed on the hospitality of Dr. and Mrs. Packard in the former city, and of Dr. and Mrs. Funk in the latter, to say nothing of spending a fortnight with Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Boyce in Tehran; and in no country have I received a warmer welcome or been made to feel so much at home. About the American missionaries, at least as we found them in Persia, there is nothing of the sanctimonious and the intolerant, popular opinion notwithstanding. They are cultivated, charming, widely traveled people of the world, who, because they have seen so much of life, have a far broader outlook than the average American. I admit, to be perfectly candid, that we were prepared for family prayers and tiresome religious discourses, but this misapprehension promptly disappeared when Mrs. Funk, our hostess at Hamadan, greeted us with the announcement: "You can put your feet on any chair I own and smoke in any room in the house. I like it, and I want you to feel perfectly at home." Dr. Packard at Kermanshah, Dr. Funk at Hamadan, and Dr. McDowell at Tehran stand in the very forefront of their professions. During their service in Persia they have performed thousands of major operations, many of them of the most difficult and delicate character, and any one of them could command an income running well into five figures were he to abandon his underpaid labors in the mission field and engage in private practice at home.

The mission stations in Persia bear such a strong general resemblance to one another that a picture of one is a picture of them all. They usually consist of from five to a dozen acres of ground, in the residential section of the town, well wooded and, if possible, with running water, encircled by a high mud wall. Once within the gate of a mission compound, and Persia is left behind; you are back in America again. Broad-verandaed, substantial-looking houses obviously built from

American plans stand in the midst of fragrant, old-fashioned gardens. There are winding, shaded walks; young people are playing tennis on a dirt court; and usually there is a swimming-pool. The mission at Hamaden possesses two cows, so that there is always a plentitude of milk and cream, and behind the barn there is a large vegetable-garden with a wonderful bed of strawberries. In the spacious living-room of the house there is an open fireplace, for the winters on the Persian uplands are bitterly cold; a Morris chair (made by a local carpenter) is drawn up beside a table heaped high with three-months-old newspapers and magazines; and there is, of course, a phonograph and a pile of records—Caruso, Harry Lauder, and "*Nearer, My God, to Thee.*" There is something of the pathetic in the attempts of these lonely exiles, far from home and friends, to reproduce in this distant corner of the world the atmosphere of the home land.

I might add that proselytism plays a much smaller part in American missionary work in Persia than most people suppose—first, because a campaign which had for its avowed purpose the conversion of the natives to Christianity would instantly arouse the hostility of the Persian Government and public, and secondly, because Mohammedan sentiment is so strong throughout the country that a Persian who renounced it for Christianity would certainly suffer social ostracism, if he escaped more serious forms of persecution. By this I do not mean to imply that there is no evangelistic work, for there is, but it is carried on mainly among the Armenians, Assyrians, Chaldeans, and other sects of Oriental Christians, who, it seemed to me, need it much more than the Persians. But the energies of the missionaries are devoted for the most part to educational and medical work, in pursuance of which they have established a chain of schools and hospitals across the whole breadth of northern Persia, from Urumia, on the frontier of Kurdistan, to Meshed, on the Afghan border. In spite of their limited facilities—several of the hospitals, for example, have not been able to afford X-ray apparatus—the value of the services rendered to humanity by the American medical missionaries is beyond calculation, as can be testified by thousands of natives who have received treatment at their hands. Nor is it an exaggeration to assert that the hope of Persia lies in the boys and girls who, in the American mission schools, are not only acquiring a modern education but are being trained as enlightened, patriotic citizens. Persia owes to these courageous, unselfish, hard-working men and women of the American missions a debt which she can never fully repay. I am proud that they are Americans.

Kermanshah is the capital of Persian Kurdistan. From a distance the city presents rather an imposing appearance, but nearer approach ends, as is the case with most mid-Asian cities, in disillusion. The residences of the wealthy are set in the midst of charming gardens, but of these the passer-by can see nothing, for they are shut off from the narrow streets by high walls of red-brown mud. Through the town meanders a little river, which, during the rainy season, becomes a raging torrent; and bordering many of the streets are rivulets, so that there is always in one's ears the pleasant sound of running water. In the heart of the city is the *maidan,* a great rectangle of sun-baked yellow earth, corresponding to an English common, where public assemblies are held and festivals celebrated, where executions take place, and where, in a pool at the very foot of the gallows, women do their washing. Fronting on this square, which is bordered by a thin fringe of discouraged-looking poplar-trees, are the government bureaus, the office of the Eastern Telegraph Company, the official residence of the governor, and numerous coffee-houses, before which the habitués laze the long and sunny days away—Persian counterparts of those who habitually congregate on the steps of country groceries at home. Beyond these, in turn, stretch the bazars, a vast labyrinth of dim and tortuous alleys, sheltered from sun and rain by vaulted roofs and lined on either side by open-fronted stalls, in which may be purchased everything from camel-saddles to cooking-utensils, from meats to mule-bells, from lacquered cases to lambskin caps. But here, as in the far larger and more interesting bazaars of Tehran, we found that the comparatively few objects possessing real artistic merit cost as much, or very nearly as much, as would similar things in New York or London. And there was surprisingly little that attracted us, for, as we were to discover later, almost the only Persian cities where really beautiful things are still to be found in any number are Shiraz and Ispahan.

Kermanshah possesses few "sights," as Herr Baedeker uses the term. In the center of the city, on a low stone platform at the side of a sort of plaza, stands a small, domed shrine of whitewashed brick, which is said to contain the tombs of Mordecai and Esther. By paying a toman to the guardian I obtained admission, being rewarded by a glimpse of two wooden sarcophagi, covered with elaborate carvings and obviously very old. The place is very sacred to the Jews, but its authenticity is open to grave doubt. In the outskirts of the city, surrounded by mounds of débris suggestive of those at Babylon, is a great stone lion. It has stood there, beyond question, for untold centuries, but who placed it there, or why, no one knows. It may, as some archæologists assert, mark the site of the palace of one of the Persian conquerors; it may have been set there by order of Cyrus, of Darius, or Alexander; but to-day it is merely a carved lion staring with inscrutable eyes across the sun-swept waste.

But, a few miles to the eastward of the city, just off the highway that leads to Tehran, is one of the most remarkable monuments in all the Eastern world—the famous Rock of Bisitun. This remarkable memorial marks the beginning of the trail through the passes of the Zagros which has been the principal highway of war and commerce between the Iranian plateau and the plains of Mesopotamia since history began—the Road of the Great Conquerors. One face of the great crag, the last of a series of jagged peaks that merge into the high mountains behind, rises almost vertically from a broad plain checkered with little patches of cultivated land. At the foot of it is a great rectangular pool kept ever filled with cold, clear water by a tumbling mountain torrent, while hard by, among the neglected tombstones of a modern

Kurdish cemetery, rise the broken columns of a Greek temple. In the south wall of a deep cleft or niche in the sheer face of the cliff, carved deep in the imperishable rock, Darius, returning to his capital of Ecbatana (the modern Hamadan) after his conquest of the lowlands along the Tigris and the Euphrates, has left a record of his greatness. The inscriptions and bas-reliefs we had come to see are carved high on the smooth face of the cliff. They depict Darius and seven captive kings who are led in judgment before him, each king being labeled with his name and titles. Near these bas-reliefs, which are of colossal size, is carved a long inscription in ancient Persian, Median, and Assyrian, recording the glorious exploits of the great conquerer and setting forth his resounding titles. To the archæologist this page from history, written on a rock, is of the utmost significance and value, for in it the English savant Rawlinson discovered the key to the cuneiform characters of the Babylonian inscriptions which dot the Mesopotamian plain. It may be said, indeed, that the Rock of Bisitun has served archæology as faithfully in solving the mysteries of Mesopotamia as did the Rosetta Stone in revealing the ancient secrets of the Nile.

The climatic change from the Mesopotamian lowlands to the great tableland of northwestern

Persia is as abrupt as it is exhilarating. When we left Kasr-i-Shirin the heat was like a blast from an open furnace-door, and so savage was the sun that we felt as though pressing down upon our helmets was a mighty unseen hand. But long before we debouched upon the plateau we were shivering in spite of our rugs and greatcoats, and the air had the tonic quality of dry champagne. Now the road was leading us to a new land and another climate, to a world totally different from the one in which we had been. The barrenness of the great solitudes of Arabia and Mesopotamia was rapidly disappearing. The mountains, it is true, were treeless, but the valleys through which we sped were deep in lush grass and ripening grain; here and there were vivid patches of wild flowers; beyond the low mud walls of the farmsteads orchards of fruit-trees—plum, peach, pomegranate, pear, and prune—stretched in seas of fragrant blossoms; and the whole countryside was crisscrossed with rapid-flowing, ice-cold streams. When, as happened with annoying frequency, we were stopped by punctures and blow-outs, we would take off shoes and leggings and bathe our feet in their refreshing coolness until the repairs had been made and we could go on again. Forgotten now were the long marches over sandy, sun-swept wastes, the weary climbs through naked mountains. With the new earth and the new air and the green expanding freshness came a quickening of the pulse, a joyous glow at heart, a sense of irresponsibility, of being foot-loose and free, for

Our hearts were patting juba
To the banjo of the spring.

My principal recollection of Hamadan, the Ecbatana of the ancients, is the cordiality of our welcome by Dr. and Mrs. Funk and their colleagues of the American mission. For in Persia, where the native hotels are almost impossible for Europeans, the traveler—the American traveler, at any rate—is passed along from mission station to mission station, just as in the Hudson Bay country one is passed on from trading-post to trading-post. A real American meal—(how well I recall the Boston brown bread and the strawberries and cream!), a warm bath, and a night spent between clean sheets, with my head on a soft pillow—that is what Hamadan will always mean to me. A former Persian minister to the United States, now resident in Hamadan, learning that we were staying at the mission, came to call on us. It was curious to hear this bearded Oriental in his lambskin cap gossiping familiarly of the Metropolitan Club and Chevy Chase, of Rock Creek Park and the Potomac Drive and Lock Tavern, and the other spots beloved by those who have dwelt in Washington. The world, to employ a bromide, is n't so large after all. Why, once, in Transcaspia, I spent a night with a Turkoman chieftain who, I found, knew America as well as I did. It turned out that for some years he had traveled with Buffalo Bill's Congress of Rough Riders of the World!

Sherin, who is an Englishman, and Hutchings, who received part of his education at Oxford, both had an inordinate fondness for tea and insisted on stopping at every roadside tea-house that presented itself. *Chai,* as tea is called, is the national drink of Persia (which, by the way, is a "dry" country, the use of alcoholic beverages being strictly forbidden by Moslem law), and facilities for procuring it are as frequent as in Russia, the keepers of the wayside tea-houses obtaining their water from the irrigation brooks and ditches which run beside the road. I warned my companions that this water was likely to be impure, but they brushed my advice aside. "Any water that is boiled is safe," asserted Sherin, and, "Running water purifies itself in two or three miles," Hutchings remarked learnedly. So, the next time we stopped for tea, I beckoned them over to the brook from which the Persian had just filled his tea-pot. In it were floating several water-beetles, numerous polliwogs, a discarded shoe, and a dead cat. After that the halts for *chai* were not so frequent.

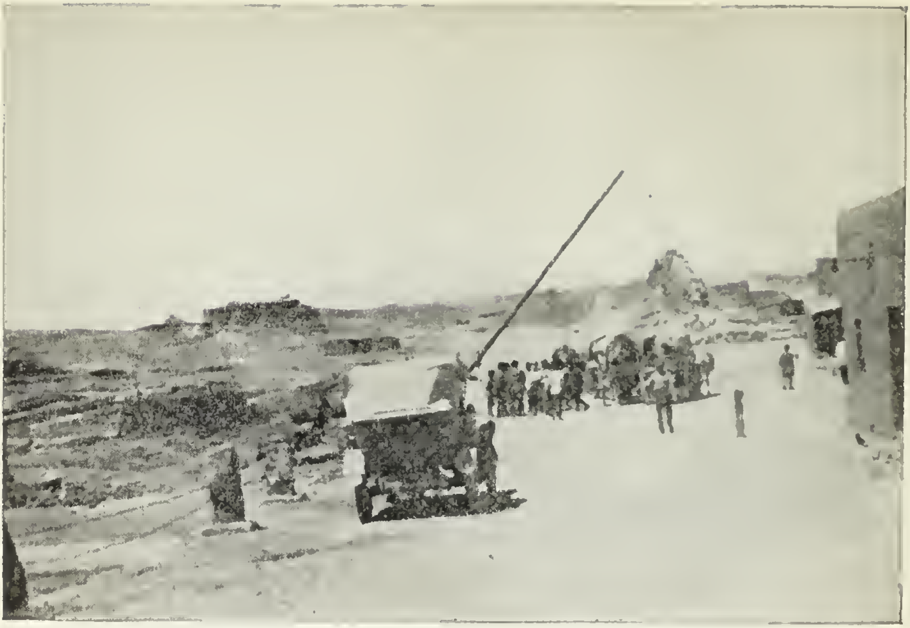
Outside of every Persian village that we passed were what appeared to be thousands and thousands of enormous fruit-cakes, a foot in diameter, and three or four inches thick, either stacked in pyramids or spread out and drying in the sun. It developed upon investigation, however, that these were not fruit-cakes, but cakes made from horse and camel dung, which the Persians use for fuel, wood being too scarce and coal virtually unknown. The collection of the material and the making of these cakes, or briquettes, is, by the way, a task almost invariably assigned to the village brides. A novel way, surely, of spending a honeymoon.

Owing to tire and engine trouble, it was past noon before we were ready to leave Hamadan, but, in spite of the fact that brigands were reported on the road, we determined to push on that night to Kazvin, a hundred and fifty miles farther, where there was reported to be a moderately good hotel. Leaving behind us the yellow town, we zigzagged through a suburb of high mud walls and interminable truck-gardens and fields white with opium poppies and so into the empty plain. Occasionally we passed a flat mud village crouching behind mud walls in a small oasis of green, but otherwise the solitude was unbroken, save for a succession of blockhouses made of mud, each in sight of the next, usually with a rifle sticking out of a loophole or a sheepskin cap showing above the roof-line. Háfiz and Saadi and Omar "the tent-maker" have cast a veil of poetry and romance over "the fields of Iran," giving foreigners the impression that Persia is a land where fountains play in fragrant gardens and where bulbuls sing eternally amid the trees. Rose-gardens do exist in Persia; and friends in whose veracity I have confidence assure me that there are likewise bulbuls—which are merely Persian nightingales—but the impression left on the traveler is of a vast, silent, treeless, lonely land, a tawny waste which sweeps away, away, until it loses itself in the shadows of the distant hills.

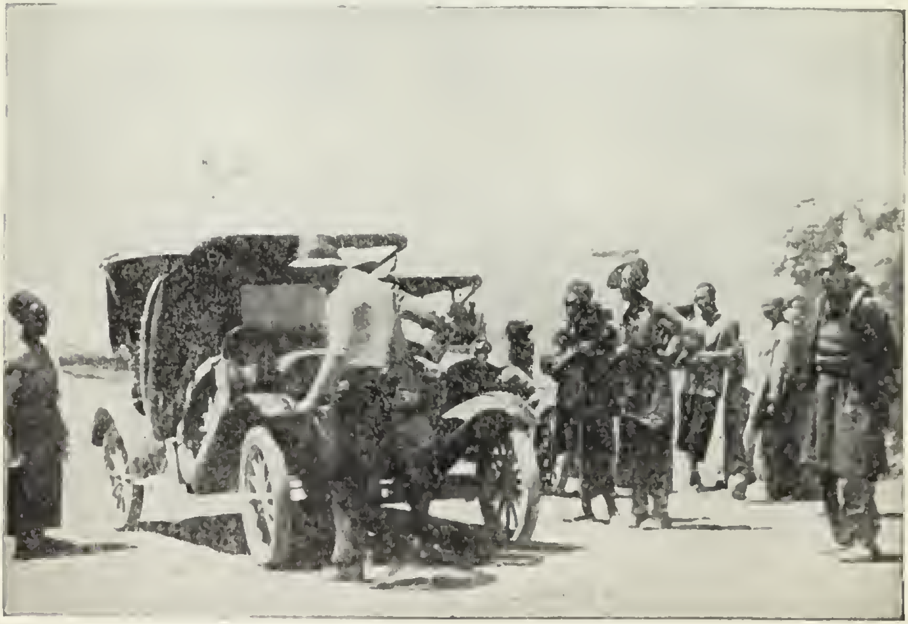
But the monotony of the countryside itself is more than made up for by the variety and color of the scenes along the road. Interminable caravans of camels, their heads, with their bright, unfriendly eyes and sneering, supercilious expressions, balanced on cobra-like necks; their enormous feet splaying out as though made of india-rubber as they touch the earth with the regularity of clockwork, their humps swaying in unhurried rhythm. Long strings of gaily caparisoned mules, jingling with bells and with merchandise laden, for this is still the route by which English cottons and Indian teas, after sailing up the Tigris to Baghdad, transship themselves to caravans for the long journey into Inner Asia. Sometimes the caravans were headed by men bearing green flags—the Prophet's banner—or a long pole on the end of which was a gilded ''hand of Hazrate Abbas,'' which is supposed to be an emblem of good luck and to keep off the evil spirits. Post-carriages, distant cousins of the ''sea-going hacks'' of pre-motor days, drawn by four horses driven abreast, the passengers peering out from the stuffy interior like pall-bearers at a funeral; high two-wheeled carts, the horses driven tandem; and big four-wheeled wagons with arching canvas tops, like the prairie-schooners of our own frontier days, with women and children sitting uncomfortably on heaps of bales and boxes and determined-looking men in fur caps, with bandoliers across their chests and rifles across their knees, seated beside the drivers. Occasionally we met patrols of mounted gendarmes, carbines slung across their backs, sitting easily on their wiry ponies; and once we passed a long column of dusty infantry, the men chanting soldier songs as they marched, after the Russian fashion. They were on their way to the hills along the Turkish border

Troopers of the famous Cossack Brigade, a force of Persians organized and originally officered by Russians, and the most efficient element of the shah's army.

A Persian post-carriage, a distant cousin of the "sea-going hack" of pre-motor days, drawn by four horses driven abreast, the passengers peering out from the stuffy interior like pall-bearers at a funeral.



A toll-station on the road from Baghdad to Tehran. There are fully a score of toll-houses between the Persian capital and the rail-head, the toll amounting to approximately one hundred dollars per car each way.



A halt for repairs in a Kurdish village. After the cars had been loaded with our luggage, food, water, spare tires, and tins of petrol, they looked like hucksters' wagons.

in an attempt to capture the elusive Simko, that Kurdish Robin Hood who has long terrorized the Persian marches, and who, when he runs out of ammunition, sends a polite message to the authorities in Tehran, asking them to despatch another expedition against him.[1] And every now and then we encountered great flocks of the fat-tailed sheep, their wool dyed in patches of orange, indigo, emerald, vermilion, just as the ranchmen of the West brand their live stock and for the same purpose, so that at times we seemed to be motoring through waves of colored wool. The tails of these Persian sheep are monstrous affairs of solid fat and their great weight must make them difficult to carry. Raise your eyebrows in disbelief, if you wish, but I saw one sheep whose tail was of such record size that its owner had attached to it a pair of rude wheels, like a child's cart, to prevent its dragging on the ground.

No matter how long the day's journey, how dense the dust, how hot the sun, we never grew tired of watching the curious types which we encountered in the villages or along the roadside. Some of them looked as though they had stepped straight from the pages of Hadji Baba or the

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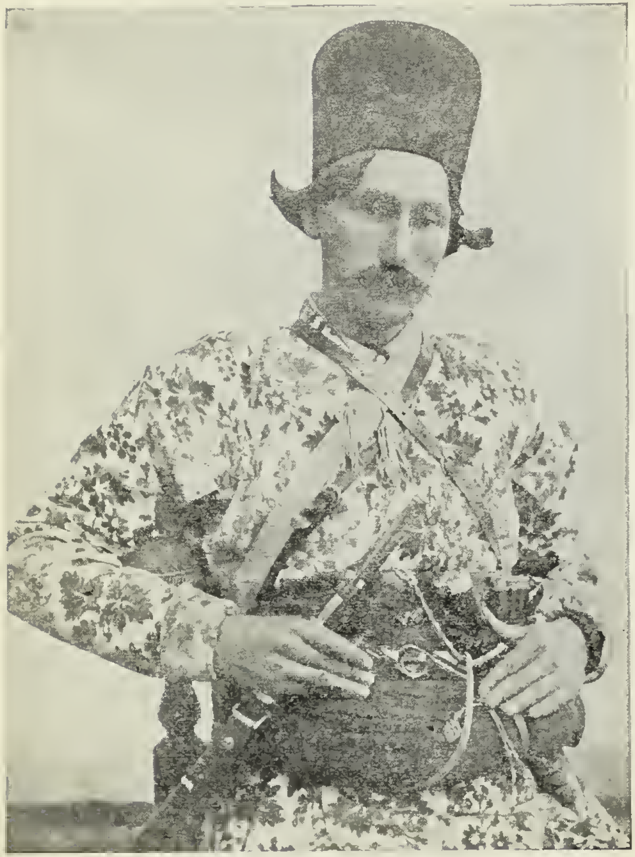
[1] Since the above was written the Persian Government has complied with the wishes of Simko, and to his great discomfiture, for his forces were defeated, his stronghold taken, and he himself fled across the Turkish border.

Thousand and One Nights. There was the old man who sold us bread in Sultanabad, for example—the bread being in the form of enormous pancakes, two feet across and as tough as leather. He was an old man, but, in order to camouflage his years, he had with henna dyed his hair and beard a vivid orange, thus giving himself a decidedly rakish appearance. This was counterbalanced, however, by his enormous *kola,* a high, miter-shaped hat of black felt, the price of which is determined by the amount of grain it will contain. The combination of the orange beard and the pontifical-looking head-dress made him resemble a pirate disguised as a prelate. The custom of dyeing the hair and beard is very common among Persians—nearly every man does it as soon as he finds that he is turning gray—though black is a commoner color than orange. There used to be in Meshed an American missionary who possessed an enormous flame-colored beard which was the pride of his life and which he found of great aid in his work of evangelism. "I am a Christian," he would say to a group of *mullahs,* "yet Allah evidently loves me more than he does you, for he has given me this splendid beard, whereas yours have to be dyed with henna." I am told that he found this argument very effective in making converts, for it was unanswerable—there was the beard as a visible proof of Allah's favoritism. He is dead now, poor man, and there has never been any one hirsutically qualified to succeed him.

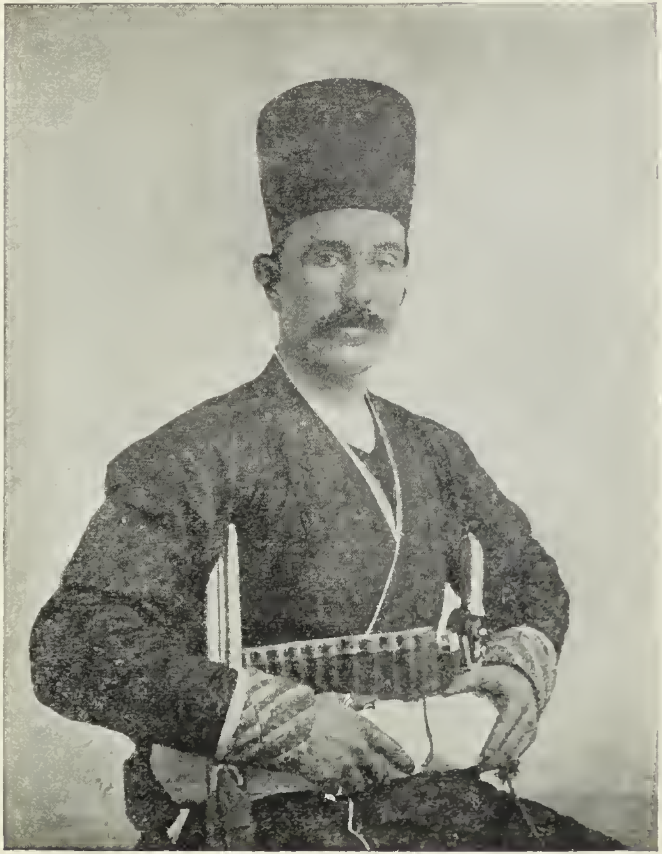
Night was at hand when we started on the last score of miles which separated us from Kazvin. The moon shone brightly, there was a distinct chill in the night breeze, and I drew my greatcoat more closely about me as I snuggled down in my corner of the car. At the last gendarmerie post we had been warned that there were brigands abroad, and on the seat beside me lay a tube of cold blue steel with six through tickets to paradise neatly packed in its magazine. It was obvious that we were now upon a great trading route, for we passed interminable lines of camels laden with bales of merchandise bound for the mysterious cities of High Asia. There is something indescribably weird and rather thrilling about the passage of laden camels at night. From a very long way off comes a murmur of bells, faint and silvery at first, which slowly increases in volume until the air pulsates with the sound. Then, quite suddenly, from out of the darkness, appears a succession of tall, fantastic forms, which stalk by on silent feet and disappear as mysteriously as they came. And you vaguely wonder where they are going—to Ispahan, perhaps, to Samarkand, Bokhara, or some of those strange cities which lie hidden away at the back of China.

Entering Kazvin by a gateway gay with green and yellow porcelains, above which floated the gaudy standard of the Lion and the Sun, we bumped down a long, tree-bordered thoroughfare, and then, in order to avoid running into the police station, turned sharply to the left into a much narrower street, jammed with camels, mules, donkeys, and pedestrians, and lined on either side by shallow porticos filled with turbaned tea-drinkers and upper balconies where now and then we caught, above momentarily raised veils, the flash of women's eyes. Why is it, I wonder, that about a woman leaning from a balcony, whether she be in Persia or Portugal, Siam or Spain, there is something peculiarly alluring?

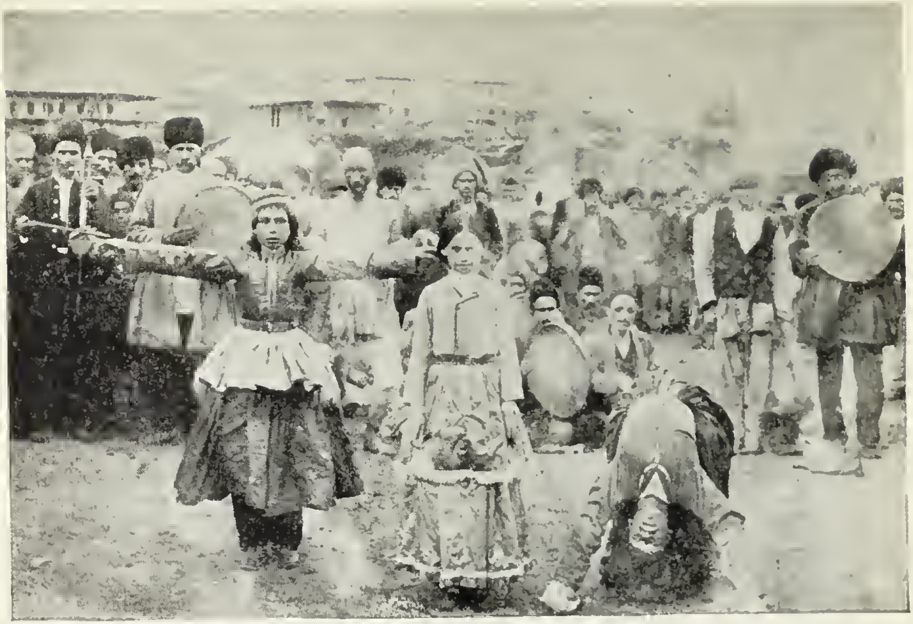
There is in Kazvin a hostelry which has the effrontery to call itself a hotel. As there is no mission station in the city we spent the night (though we did not sleep) at this lodging-place, of which I had read in a book written a good many years ago by a Mr. Benjamin, who was the first American minister to Persia. Of it he writes, "I was surprised and charmed to find at Kazvin a really elegant hotel, with rooms furnished in the European style and with an excellent



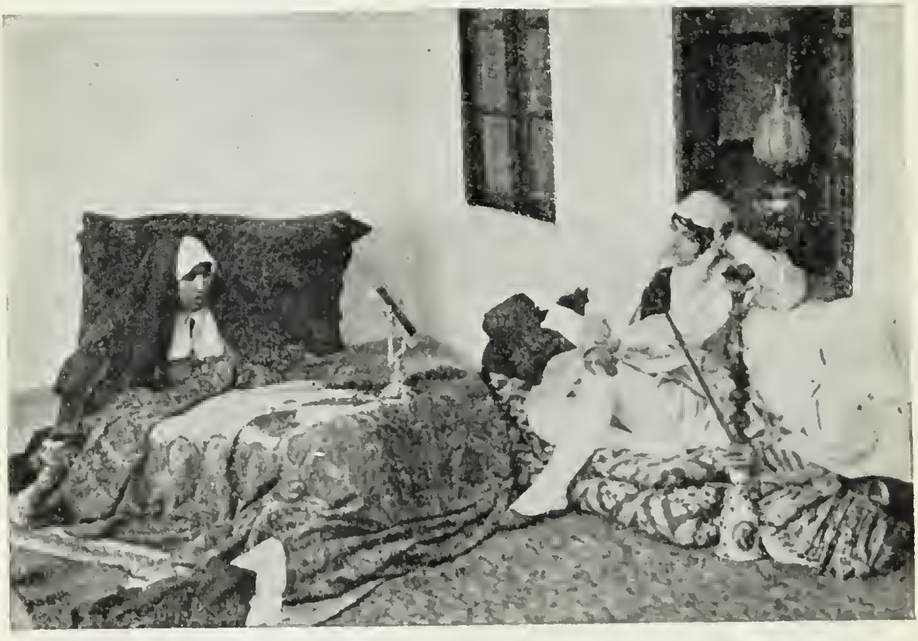
South Persian types: a Ghashgai.



South Persian types: a Shirazi.



Persian dancing boys.



A Persian lady wearing the white drawers that were introduced by Muzaffer-ed-Din in imitation of the tights worn by the ballet-dancers of the Paris Opera.

cuisine." Either there has been a sad deterioration in the Kazvin hotel since Mr. Benjamin's time, or his ideas of what constitutes "a really elegant hotel" differ diametrically from mine. Of course some robust souls may consider me finical, but I must confess to an aversion to hotels where the rush of patrons is so great that the proprietor does not find time to change the bed-linen between departures and arrivals, and where a guest with a well developed olfactory organ can deduce from the essences, hair-oils, pomades, and perfumes which permeate his pillow the nationalities of the heads which have rested on it before him.

It is only about ninety miles from Kazvin to Tehran, but the road, which runs across an arid and dusty plain, is in execrable condition, being intersected at frequent intervals by rivulets, overflows from the irrigation canals, which reminded us of "thank-you-ma'ams" on country roads at home, and made even moderate speed out of the question. But we paid scant heed to the discomforts now, for, after a journey half around the globe, we were within sight of our objective. Peculiarly desolate and forbidding was the countryside that we were now traversing, but we forgot its present-day dreariness in the romance of its past, for over there rose the ruins of Rhey, the ancient Rhages, and beyond, in his stronghold of

Alamut, had dwelt the Old Man of the Mountains, the chief of that sinister secret order known as the Assassins, the Oriental Ku Klux Klan, which for more than two centuries laid a spell of terror over all this region. Ahead of us the majestic peak of Demavand, its summit wreathed in veils of cloud, rose eighteen thousand feet into the Persian blue, while to the north and west the toothed range of the Elburz curved in a great amphitheater. We topped a rise in the road and there came in view the wooded hillsides of the Shimran. And at its foot, where the green slopes met the yellow plain, spread the flat, brown roofs of Tehran, the city of the Peacock Throne.

CHAPTER VIII

THE CITY OF THE PEACOCK THRONE

TEHRAN (the word is accented on the second syllable and rimes with John) might much more fittingly have been named Khaki, which is the Persian word for dust. During the dry season the unpaved streets are inches deep in dust, which, when stirred up by a passing vehicle or a vagrant breeze, rises in yellow clouds, dense as a London fog and almost as suffocating as poison gas. As a result, everything, including the trees, is heavily dust-coated. To protect their clothing, the people of the upper classes wear thin, voluminous cloaks called *abahs,* also of the prevailing dust color, so that they become almost invisible as they flit along between the high mud walls with which every street is lined. The dwellings of the poor are of dusty, sun-dried bricks, with flat roofs of mud, and even the houses of the rich are built of the same uninteresting material, usually camouflaged, however, by a coat of white or tinted plaster. This reminds me of one of my daily amusements in Tehran. A well known politician was erecting a somewhat pretentious house in the same street as the American mission, where I was staying, and every morning, when I was out for a stroll, I would pause and watch the masons at their work. The performance never varied. The man at the top of the ladder would sing out, in what he fondly believed to be a melodious tone, ''Brother, in the name of Allah, toss me up a brick,'' whereupon the one below would mark his compliance with the request by chanting, ''In the name of God, behold a brick, O my brother.'' I have often heard bricklayers in America invoke the name of the Deity, but they used it in quite a different sense.

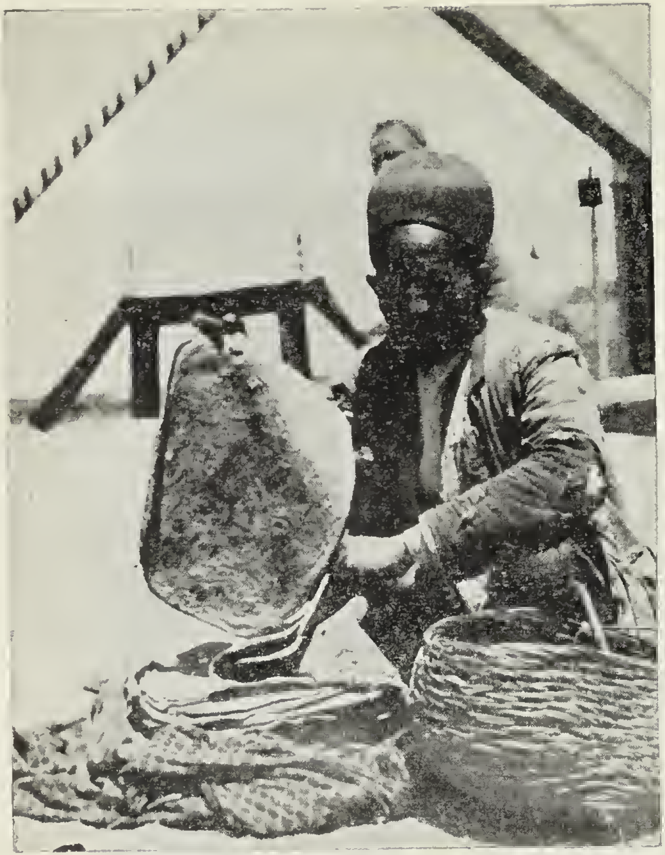
The chief beauty of Tehran is in its gardens, some of which are very charming, but, as is the case in most Oriental cities, high walls render them invisible to the passer-by. Every garden, even the smallest, boasts a fountain, and the larger ones have huge tanks, or pools, usually bordered with tiled or marble copings and hedged about with flowers. In the garden of the house which was occupied by the American legation when I was in Tehran was a tank which must have covered nearly an acre. Its stone-girt edges were hemmed with banks of red geraniums, and in the center was a charming little island, with a flower-smothered summer-house, access to which was gained by two rustic bridges. In some such setting, I imagine, were written the immortal lyrics of Háfiz and Omar Khayyám. When, upon leaving Tehran, I went to the legation to say good-by to the American minister, Dr. Kornfeld, I found him swathed in bandages and suffering acutely from blood-poisoning—the result, he explained, of having a tank in his garden, for these pools of stagnant water, beautiful as they are, provide ideal breeding-places for millions of mosquitoes and the smaller but no less irritating sand-flies, whose bite frequently produces a mild form of fever. Owing to the parsimony of Congress, which has displayed a curious reluctance to purchase permanent homes for our diplomatic representatives, or even to provide sufficient funds to enable them to rent suitable houses, our legation in Tehran has long been a peripatetic establishment, here to-day and somewhere else to-morrow. Rents in Tehran are high, and there are never enough desirable houses to meet the demand; so, unless the minister possesses private means and is willing to spend them, life in Persia is one continual moving-day for him. When asked where he lives, he might well reply, like a famous colleague in London, "I am the American minister; I have no home."

There is little in Tehran to remind one of the greatness and grandeur which once was Persia's;

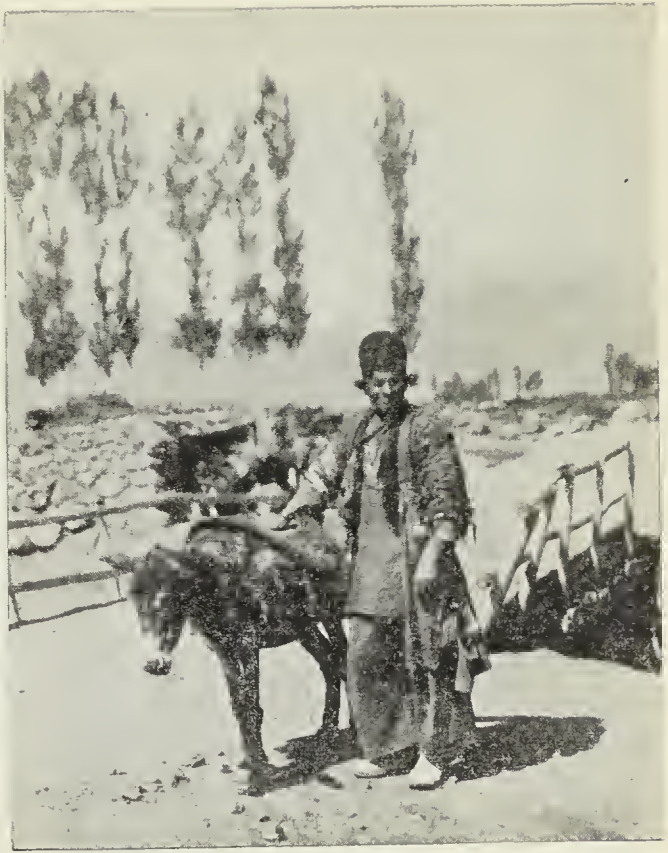
the turquoise domes, the stately mosques, the gorgeous coloring which I had anticipated are entirely lacking. It is true that the city gates and the walls of most of the palaces and public buildings are decorated with glazed tiles of charming colors, but the effect is ruined by the fact that many of the tiles have fallen off and have not been replaced, thus producing an atmosphere of decay and dilapidation. Save in point of size, for they are very large, the Tehran bazaars have little to distinguish them from the bazaars of a score of other cities I could name, while, in articles of Persian art, they are far inferior to the marts of Shiraz and Ispahan. In the European quarters of the capital, for which Nasr-ed-Din, the great-grandfather of the present ruler, was responsible, the streets are surprisingly wide and are shaded by double rows of spreading plane-trees, whose roots run down to open conduits of rapidly flowing water—miniature canals, as it were, on either side of every street. The murmur of the water as it flows beneath the trees is very restful, and the general effect is charming, but, as the conduits are frequently several feet wide, and as there are rarely any bridges or cross-walks, the pedestrian has to possess the agility of a mountain goat and the leaping qualities of an Irish hunter. The city's principal shopping thoroughfare is known as the Lalehzar, meaning "Avenue of Tulips" (though I do not recall having seen any on it), and close by is the Street of the Gas-Lights, so named from the fact that an attempt was once made to illuminate it by means of gas-lamps. Because of the Persian street-names and the absence of numbers on many of the houses, it is very difficult for a foreigner to find a given address in Tehran. If you ask how to find a certain house you will probably be told to "go up this street four blocks, turn to your right and keep on until you come to a square with a fountain in the middle, cross the square, bear to your left, enter the first alley on your left, and the house you are looking for is either the third or fourth on the right—you can tell it by the green door in the wall."

Speaking of street names reminds me that, until very recently, there were, with certain exceptions, no family names in Persia. This led to so much inconvenience and confusion that, two or three years ago, an edict was issued requiring that, before a specified date, every person in the empire must adopt a family name. The perplexity and excitement occasioned by this edict can better be imagined than described. For the next few months Persia was like a big summer hotel on the eve of a fancy-dress ball, when every one rushes about demanding frantically: "What are you going to go as? For Heaven's sake, can't you suggest something for me?'' The names thus chosen were, as might have been expected, sometimes naïve, frequently curious, occasionally amusing. The old man who for many years had served as guardian of the gate of the American mission chose the Persian equivalent of ''Honest and Faithful.'' A postman decided, with rare appropriateness, upon ''Here, There, and Everywhere.'' And a merchant, who was of a practical turn of mind, selected his telephone-number, ''Three Hundred and Ten.''

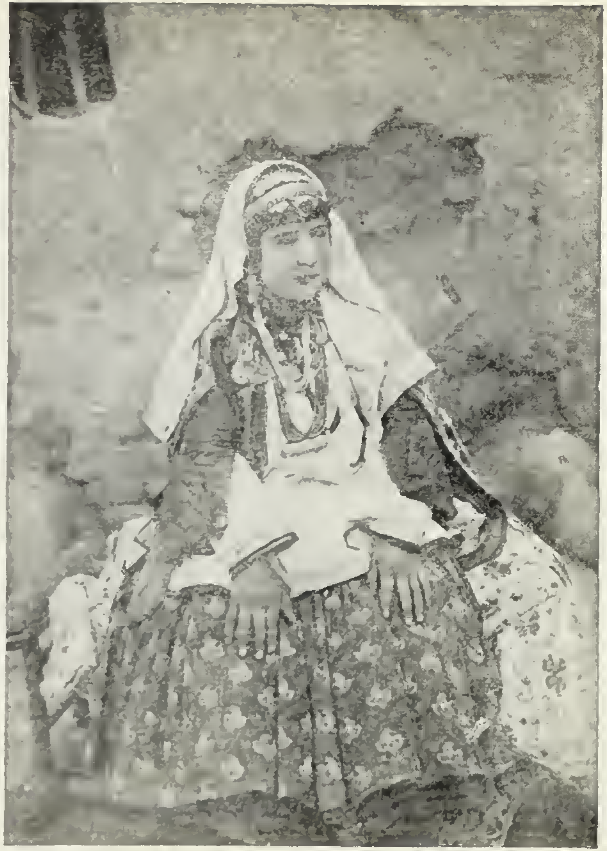
Though, as I have just remarked, the Tehran bazaars are in character not particularly different from those of other Oriental cities, they are among the largest in all Asia. I do not know how much ground they cover, but, were I to venture a guess, I should place their area at not far from a square mile. So complicated and perplexing is the labyrinth of dim alleyways and passages, which twist and turn and double back on themselves in the most bewildering fashion, that the oldest Tehrani frequently finds himself at a loss which way to go. Though I have, I think, an exceptionally well developed ''bump of location'' and can usually orient myself in any surroundings, I always felt that I should like to carry a ball of string when visiting the bazaars, unwinding it as I progressed



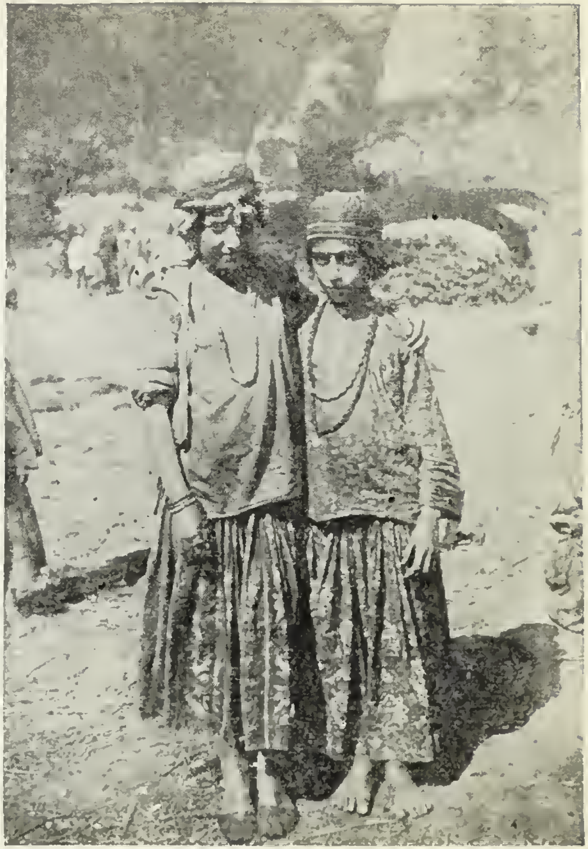
An old man who sold us bread in Sultanabad—the bread being in the form of enormous pancakes, two feet across and as tough as leather. In order to camouflage his years he had with henna dyed his beard a vivid orange.



A Persian and his ass on the road near Hamadan. The price of the *kola*, the high, miter-shaped hat of black felt which is the universal head-dress of western Persia, is determined by the amount of grain it will contain.



All dressed up and nowhere to go. A twelve-year-old Shahsevan bride from near Kazvin.



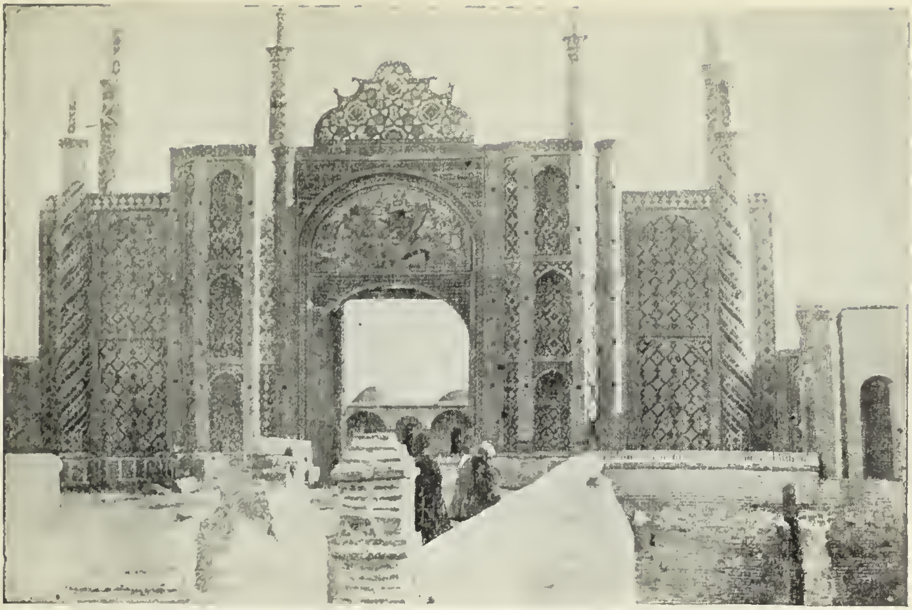
Two little maids from school are we—or would be, if there were a school to go to. They are Taliche girls from the southern shore of the Caspian.

into their dim interior so that it would mark my path back to the exit. The main bazaar consists of a series of long passages, perhaps twenty feet in width, the only light filtering in through narrow apertures in the lofty vaulted roof: spears of sunlight piercing the clouds of dust stirred up by the teeming throng below. These main passages, as well as the much narrower and winding ones which connect them, are lined on either side by narrow shops and stalls. At the back many of these shops open into stone-paved courtyards, or caravanserais, where the merchandise is unloaded from the camels and pack-mules upon the arrival of a caravan, and where the weary animals are stabled after their long journey. Few of these shops are more than twenty feet square, and the merchant, sitting cross-legged on the floor at the front of his booth, is within easy reach of every article in his stock, yet the volume of business transacted in this primitive fashion is frequently astonishing, many of the bazaar merchants being rich men, even when judged by the standards of New York.

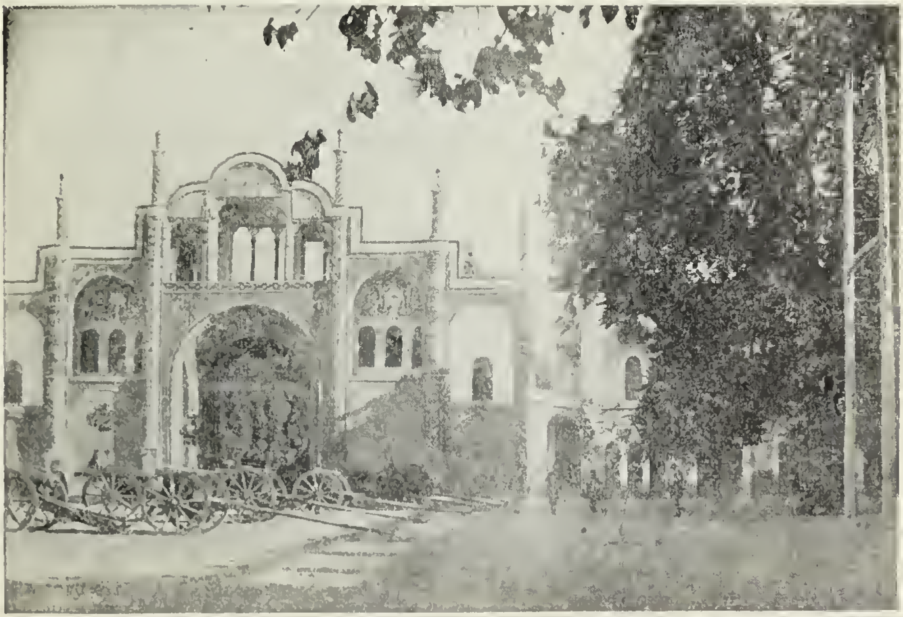
Any one who is accustomed to the turmoil of a great American department-store during the holiday rush would feel perfectly at home in the bazaars of Tehran, for the noise is deafening and the confusion beyond description. Every few moments one has to flatten oneself against the wall to escape being crushed by a file of camels laden with huge bales of merchandise; droves of donkeys, whooped on by shrieking muleteers, charge recklessly through the crowd; porters, bearing loads that would defy the huskiest American baggage-smasher, bawl, "*Kabardar! Kabardar!*" which is the Persian equivalent for "Gangway!" Carriages, usually bearing rich merchants or sight-seeing *ferinjees,* clatter through the crowded thoroughfares, their drivers heedless of the safety of the pedestrians; merchants reach out from their stalls to clutch the garments of a prospective customer, or pursue him through the crowd, reducing their prices as the chance of making a sale grows slimmer; beggars fawn and cringe, push and jostle, entreat and imprecate; the vaulted passages resound to an unending din —the snarl of camels, the raucous bray of mules and donkeys, the crack of whips, the clank and jingle of bells, the clatter of tinware, the hammers of the woodworkers, the tearing of cloth, shouts, yells, curses, pleadings, the deep low hum of thousands of voices and the ceaseless shuffle, shuffle, shuffle of thousands of feet. Permeating everything is that curious, indefinable odor, a combination of cedar, musk, incense, spices, garlic, tobacco, leather, wood-smoke, dung, the sweat of animals, and human perspiration, which is known as the "bazaar smell," while over everything hovers a pall of yellow dust.

The bazaars of Tehran, as I have remarked elsewhere, are very disappointing to one in quest of those *objets d'art* for which Persia has long been famous. The carpets that I saw displayed struck me as being distinctly mediocre in coloring and patterns, though this is due, no doubt, to the fact that the finest products of the Persian looms are eagerly snapped up by the keen-eyed American and European buyers before ever they leave the towns where they are woven; the prices asked for the few illuminated manuscripts that I saw were fully as high as would be demanded on Fifth Avenue; I found it impossible to obtain any really fine turquoises, though all my life I had heard of Persia's turquoise-mines: and of the enamel-work for which Ispahan has long been celebrated I saw none at all in Tehran. I did succeed, however, after nearly a fortnight of bargaining, in obtaining a really fine specimen of a Persian shawl. This was due, however, to the kindness of a Persian exporter to whom I had a letter of introduction from an American friend. Sending his agent to the numerous dealers in that sort of merchandise, he succeeded in collecting for my inspection upward of a hundred shawls, the finest in Tehran. The Persian shawl should not be confused with the Kashmir shawls of which our grandmothers were proud possessors, and which were copied in great numbers by the Paisley looms. The Persian shawl, instead of being square, like the Kashmir, with triangles of embroidery in the corners and in the center an embroidered medallion, is a strip of solid needlework, about a yard wide and four yards long. The name of its maker, sometimes surmounted by the emblem of the Lion and the Sun done in silver thread, is frequently to be found in one corner of the finer specimens. The most *chic* design is the so-called ''pineapple'' pattern on a white ground. Such a shawl costs in Tehran from a hundred dollars upward. These shawls are not intended to be worn as a wrap, but to be cut into one of the long, tight-fitting coats, reaching almost to the heels, which are the garments worn by all Persian officials at court and on other state occasions.

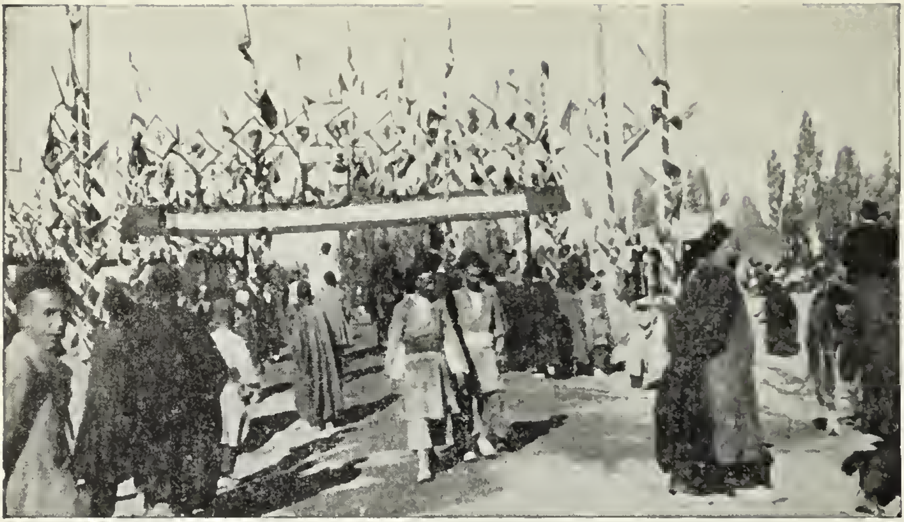
Few Americans realize that Tehran is one of the greatest fur-markets in the world, being a recognized center for the sale and export of lambskins from Persia and Transcaspia, sable and ermine from European Russia, fox and stone-marten from the Caucasus and Kurdistan, and otter from the Caspian. I had planned to bring Mrs. Powell enough lambskins to make a coat,



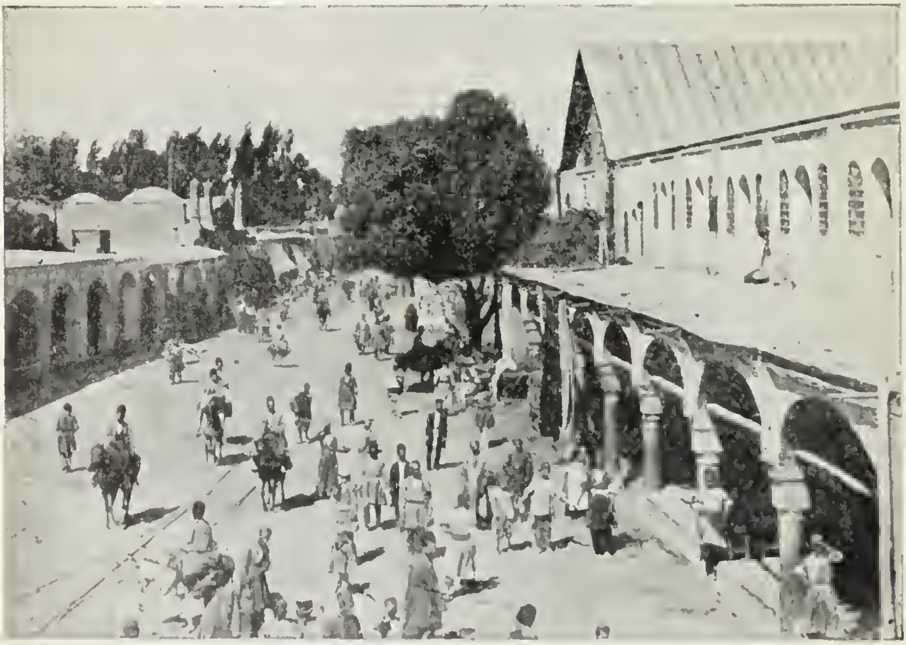
The Persian capital has twelve imposing gateways—colored tiles on a brown mud ground—but just without them are heaps of debris and refuse pits.



The Nagara-khaneh, which leads from the Place des Canons to the Street of Diamonds. On its gallery is played, at sunrise and sunset, that strange, barbaric fanfare known as "the music of a thousand years."



"The Valiahd is coming!" Crowd assembled around a triumphal arch at the entrance to Hamadan to greet the crown prince of Persia upon his return from Europe.



The principal shopping thoroughfare of Tehran is known as Charak Gaz—Street of the Gas-Lights—from the fact that an attempt was once made to illuminate it by means of gas lamps.

but I quickly discovered that, unless one is a furrier, it is next to impossible to select skins which will match in color, curl, and texture. It is, moreover, becoming exceedingly difficult to obtain lambskins of the finer quality, as the Persian Government has put a stop to the wide-spread practice of killing the Karakul sheep in order to obtain the fleece of the unborn lamb. So I compromised on a dozen exceptionally fine stone-martens, for which, if I remember rightly, I paid in the neighborhood of a hundred tomans.

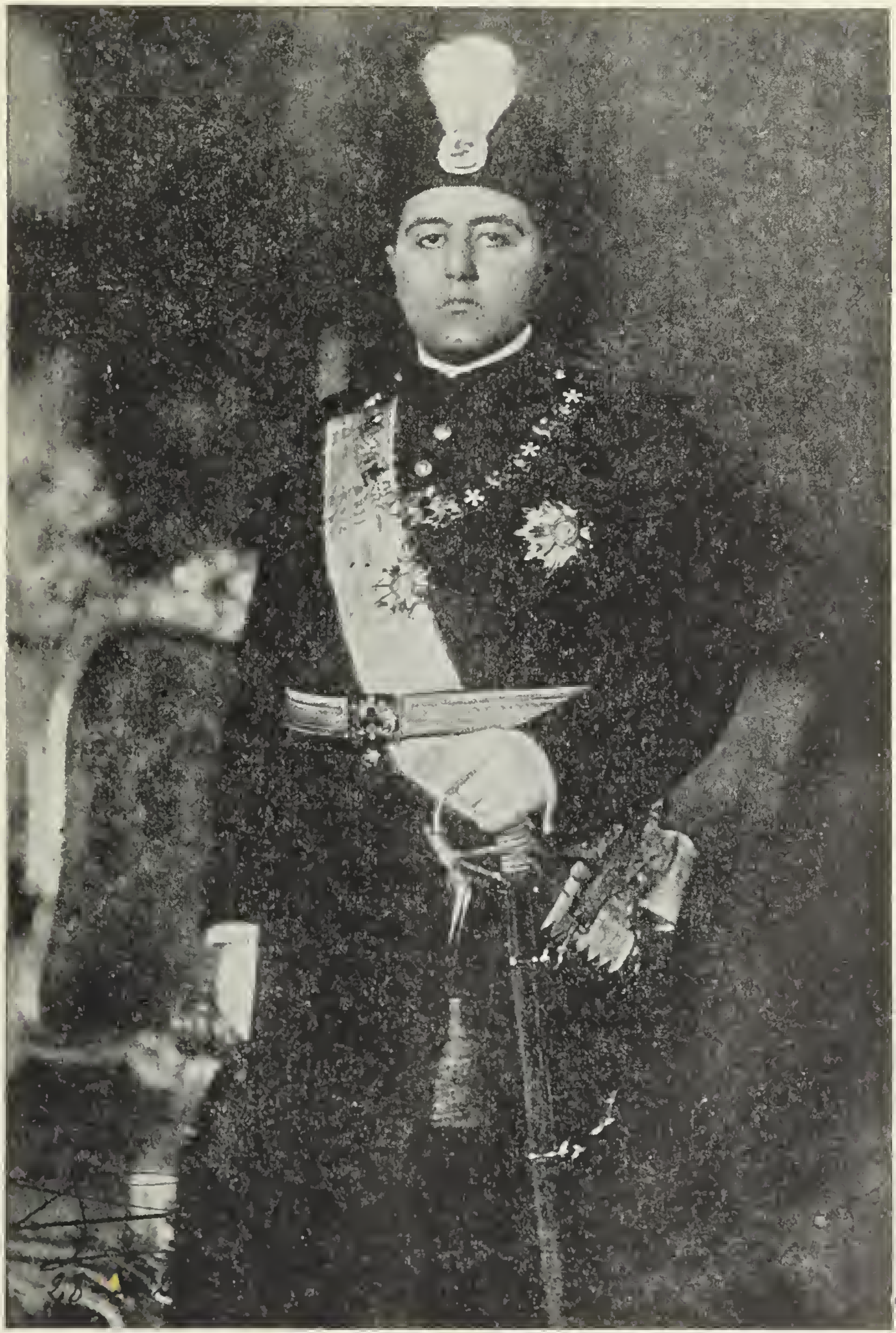
In the center of Tehran is the great Maidan, which is to the shah's capital what the Horse-Guards' Parade is to London, being, it is said, the largest drill-ground in the world. From dawn till dark this vast, sun-swept square resounds to the tramp of feet, the blare of bugles, and soldiers' voices raised in song, for since the dramatic *coup d'état* of Riza Khan, a burly and aggressive fighter from one of the northern provinces, who in a few short years climbed from a private in the ranks to commander-in-chief, minister of war, and virtual dictator of Persia, the Persian army, long a subject for ridicule, has undergone a transformation. During the quarter-century which preceded Riza Khan's assumption of dictatorial powers, the Persian army had probably been "reorganized" more frequently than any similar body of troops in the world. In this period the soldiers of the shah had enjoyed periods of British, French, Austrian, Italian, and Russian instruction, when officers detailed in turn from each of those armies had done their best to undo the work of their predecessors and to teach the young Persian idea how to shoot according to their own manual and standards. As a result of the miscellaneous instructions with which he has been bombarded, it is scarcely surprising, then, that your Persian soldier salutes like an Englishman, presents arms like a Frenchman, executes the Austrian parade-step, and rides with the bent knees and short stirrup-leathers of the Muscovite. As a matter of fact, it was only the Russian instructors who made their influence felt, the so-called Cossack Division, a force of Persian cavalry which had been drilled and officered by Russians, still forming the *corps d'élite* of the shah's army.

But upon the début of Riza Khan the morale and discipline of the army underwent a change almost overnight. Realizing from the outset that his retention of power, if not his very life, depended upon the efficiency and loyalty of the army, he set about welding and tempering and pounding it into a dependable weapon. His first step in this direction consisted in the abrupt dismissal of all the foreign officers and military advisers, and the appointment of Persians (most of whom had received European military instruction) in their stead. "I have no objection to the other branches of the Government having foreign advisers," he said to me one day, replying to a question. "They need them. But there will be no foreign advisers for the army. I am quite able to look after that myself."

Since the advent of this picturesque and forceful figure the Persian soldier has enjoyed no sinecure. During my stay in Tehran I was invariably awakened at daybreak by the tramp of battalions passing the mission compound on their way to take part in manœuvers without the city, and we would hear them returning to barracks, always singing, when we were sitting down to dinner. Though, owing to the financial condition of the Government, the Persian army is at present sadly deficient in artillery, machine-guns, transport, and, indeed, much of the other paraphernalia of modern warfare, it has a great supply of excellent material, for your Persian peasant is strong, patient, reasonably intelligent, possessed of amazing endurance, accustomed to hardships, is by no means deficient in courage, and submits readily to discipline; so I see no reason why, if

Riza Khan remains in power and pursues his present policy, it should not eventually become a force to be reckoned with.

I had a long talk with the dictator, who is in many respects the most interesting personality in Middle Asia to-day. Upward of six feet in height, broad-shouldered and burly, he bears scant physical resemblance to any other Persians whom I have known. In his piercing eyes, his quick, energetic manner, and his fashion of speaking directly to the point he reminded me of another dictator whom I know, "Pancho" Villa, of Mexican fame. And in his ruthless brushing aside of obstacles Riza still further resembles his prototype below the Rio Grande. Persian politicians, members of the Medjliss, even cabinet ministers, have found that it is not healthy to oppose him. Less than a dozen years ago he was a private soldier, detailed, at one time, for sentry-duty before the American mission compound. It is said of him that he had the reputation of being able to stand more flogging than any man in the army. To-day he is the real head of the Government, and from him the cabinet and Parliament take their orders. Whether he has used his great power to make money I do not know; it would be surprising if he had not, in view of his upbringing and of Persian customs. That he is patriotic and has the best interests of



The King of Kings—His Imperial Majesty Sultan Ahmad Shah. Born January 20, 1898.

Riza Khan, minister of war and commander-in-chief, who has risen in a few years from a private of the Cossack Brigade to be the virtual dictator of Persia.

his country at heart, there can be no question. I am told that he does not know the meaning of fear, and he certainly has the courage of his convictions. Dictators have gone out of fashion in the West, but at the present juncture, to my way of thinking, Persia stands in need of just such a man.

The Persians say, "The Americans have a factory in Tehran where they manufacture men." Because, as an American, I am proud of that factory, permit me to tell you something about it and its products. The first American mission was established in Tehran a little more than half a century ago, and a few months later a school for boys was opened. During the first twenty-five years of its existence, however, its pupils were drawn exclusively from the Armenians, Jews, and Zoroastrians, for the Moslems, who comprise 98 per cent of the population of Persia, were forbidden by the Government to attend. In the late nineties, however, a few Moslem boys, sons of progressive men who believed in Western forms of government and Western education, began to attend. The American educational institutions in the Persian capital now comprise a school for boys with nearly six hundred students, a school for girls with more than three hundred, and a collegiate development of the former, known as Tehran College, with about eighty boarders. A campus of almost sixty acres, just outside the city walls and facing one of the city gates, was purchased some years ago by the college, and on it have been erected a large dormitory and several residences for members of the faculty, most of whom are Americans. More buildings, for which there is a steadily growing demand, will be erected as soon as the finances of the college permit. The courses now being taught, or planned for the immediate future, are a ''general efficiency'' course—corresponding to the arts course of an American college—commercial, Bible training, and medicine. Pharmacy, agriculture, and engineering also are demanded and will be added as soon as possible.

One of the remarkable things about these schools is the class of students enrolled. While students from every grade of society and every race and creed are accepted without discrimination, an unusually large proportion are children of the nobility and the aristocracy. More than one fifth of the pupils at the college are the sons of government officials. Among the eighty odd boys in the boarding department when we were in Tehran were two brothers of the prime minister, the son of his immediate predecessor, six grandsons of the three most prominent premiers who have governed Persia during the last half-century, and who together ruled the empire about thirty years. It is as if a comparatively small ''prep'' school in America should number among its students two brothers of President Harding, a son of Woodrow Wilson, two grandsons of William H. Taft, three grandsons of Theodore Roosevelt, and a grandson of Grover Cleveland, to say nothing of the sons of governors too numerous to mention. In addition to these there are studying in the American schools the sons of imperial princes—first and second cousins of the shah—of governors of provinces, and of other high officials and influential men—boys who, whether educated or not, will in future years help to shape the destinies of Persia. Seldom, if ever, has any school had such an opportunity to mould the new life of an awakening nation. And it must be remembered that many of these boys come from the most distant parts of the empire, twenty, thirty, forty days' journey by caravan, and remain in the school for years without returning home. While it would be possible to fill the schools with the children of the rich, the children of the poor are not neglected, a considerable proportion of the pupils being taken without charge. The spirit of the American schools is, as might be expected, essentially democratic. The sons of princes, cabinet ministers, and nobles mingle on terms of perfect equality with the children of the lowly, share the same seats, attend the same classes, rub shoulders on the football field and the baseball diamond. In the boarding department each boy makes his own bed and takes his turn waiting on table.

The enlightening influence of these schools has been one of the most important factors in the awakening of Persia and the establishment of a constitutional government and free institutions. The young men who have been trained in them are already exercising an influence out of all proportion to their number. They are found throughout the length and breadth of the empire in positions of honor and trust—as members of Parliament, secretaries in the various ministries, chiefs of customs, directors of posts and telegraphs in various cities, officers in the army and the gendarmerie, officials in banks, native and foreign; they are teachers, physicians, editors of newspapers, while some of the best text-books in the vernacular have been prepared by graduates of the American schools. These young men form the most promising element in Persia to-day. And the same may be said of the school for girls. So rapidly have its three hundred-odd students adopted the customs of Western civilization that more than once it has required the restraining influence of Mrs. Boyce and her assistants to prevent the Moslem girls from discarding their veils and, in defiance of the law, appearing on the streets with uncovered faces. Nothing more strikingly illustrates the confidence reposed by the Persians in the American teachers than the fact that the motion-picture shows occasionally held in the compound of the girls' high school is the only public entertainment which the police permit the Moslem women of the capital to attend. As, on these occasions, the women were accustomed to remove their veils, Hutchings and I, who were staying with the Boyces, either had to remain indoors or leave the compound altogether until the performance was over and the women had departed.

Though, in conformity with Moslem custom, even the more enlightened Persian women still veil their faces and cloak themselves in the shapeless *tchador-t-chakhchour,* the garments which they wear underneath—at least so I have been told—adhere as closely to the latest European fashions as the means of their wearers will permit. There are numerous French and Russian *modistes* in Tehran who do a thriving business with the women-folk of the upper classes; Mrs.

Boyce is the editor of a semimonthly women's paper, printed in Persian, which always devotes several pages to the latest fashions; and she told me that the old copies of "Vogue," "The Delineator," and "The Ladies' Home Journal" were eagerly sought by her Persian friends. As a result of this craze for western fashions, the picturesque costumes which foreigners associate with Persian women have almost disappeared. The fantastic style of women's dress which became the vogue during the reign of Nasr-ed-Din Shah was introduced in an amusing way. When that monarch made his first visit to Europe a gala performance was given in his honor at the Paris Opera. The ruler of Persia was so fascinated by the gauzy ballet-skirts and silken tights of the *coryphées* that he determined to introduce the fashion upon his return to his own country. The palace dressmakers succeeded in producing something resembling the short, outstanding skirts of the French ballet-dancers, but the silken tights presented an insuperable difficulty until some ingenious soul suggested the substitution of men's woolen drawers, which would produce the desired effect and would at the same time be more suited to the rigors of a Persian winter. The shah agreed to this compromise and ordered it adopted by the women of the imperial *enderoun,* and, in an amazingly short time, ballet-skirts and balbriggan drawers became the fashion from one end of the empire to the other. Though such costumes might still be found, no doubt, in some of the remote provincial towns, they have entirely disappeared from the larger cities, where the women, once their veils and cloaks are doffed, are found to be dressed very much like their sisters of Fifth Avenue and the Rue de la Paix. Indeed, I have seen far more women in "Persian costume" at fancy-dress balls in the United States than I ever saw in Persia.

I have said that there is little in Tehran to remind one of Persia's vanished grandeur, but the rule is proved by one splendid exception—the Peacock Throne. This is that jeweled chair of state, once the property of the Grand Mogul, which was valued at thirty millions of dollars when it stood in the Diwan-i-Am in Delhi. It was carried off to Tehran in 1739 by Nadir Shah, the Persian conqueror, and is now kept in the treasure-room of the royal palace. Ever since our arrival in Tehran we had attempted to obtain permission to see this historic and fabulously valuable piece of furniture, but, for some inexplicable reason, our requests had been met with evasions and excuses; the throne really was n't worth seeing, we were assured; it had been greatly overrated; repairs were being made to the treasure-room, and so on, and so on, and so on.

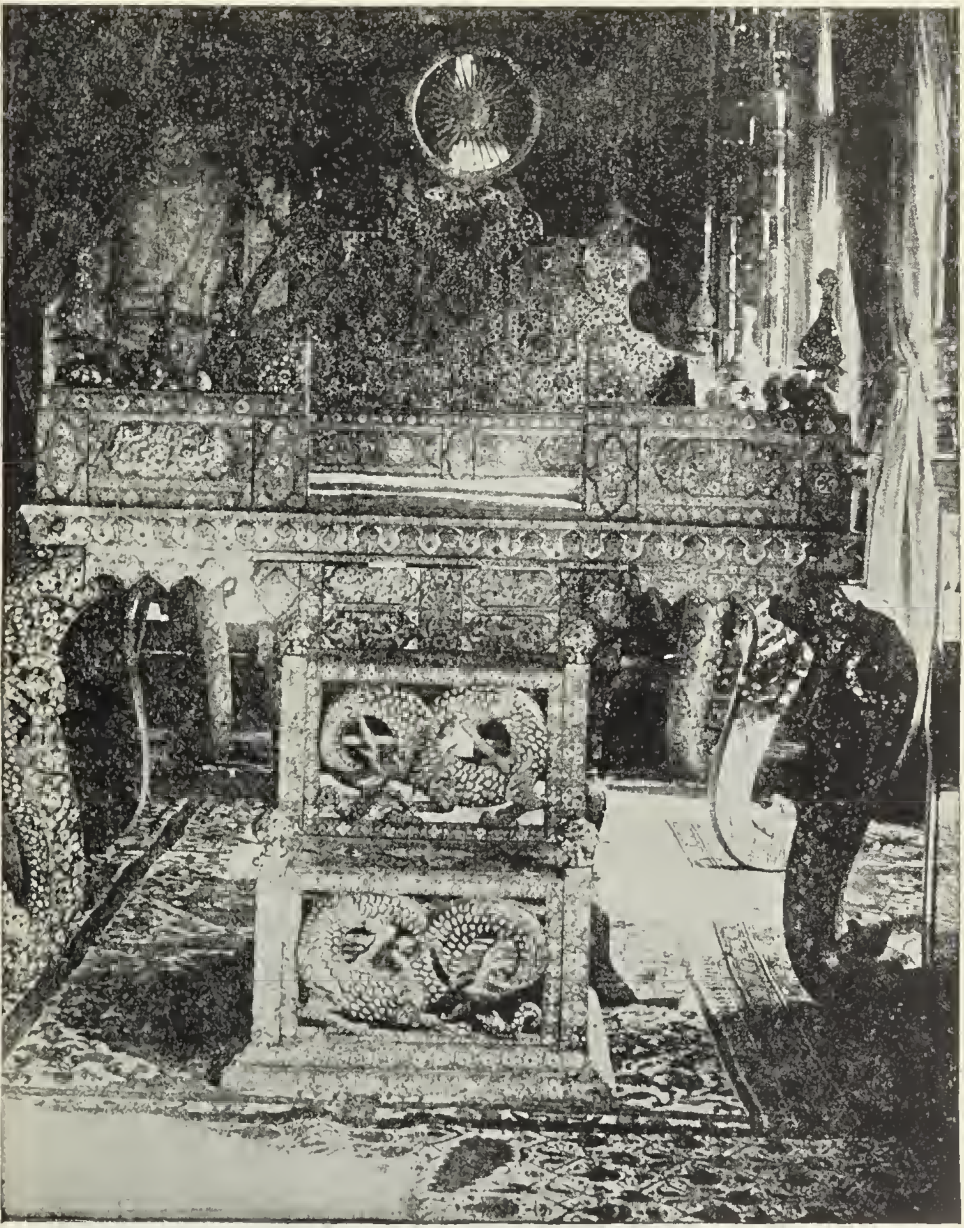
"But we simply can't leave without seeing it," Ladew insisted. "If we told our friends at home that we had been in Persia and had n't seen the Peacock Throne they would think we were crazy. It would be like visiting Niagara without seeing the falls."

"I 'll have one more try," I promised, "when we have tea with the prime minister this afternoon. If that fails, the only thing left will be to cable the shah in Paris."

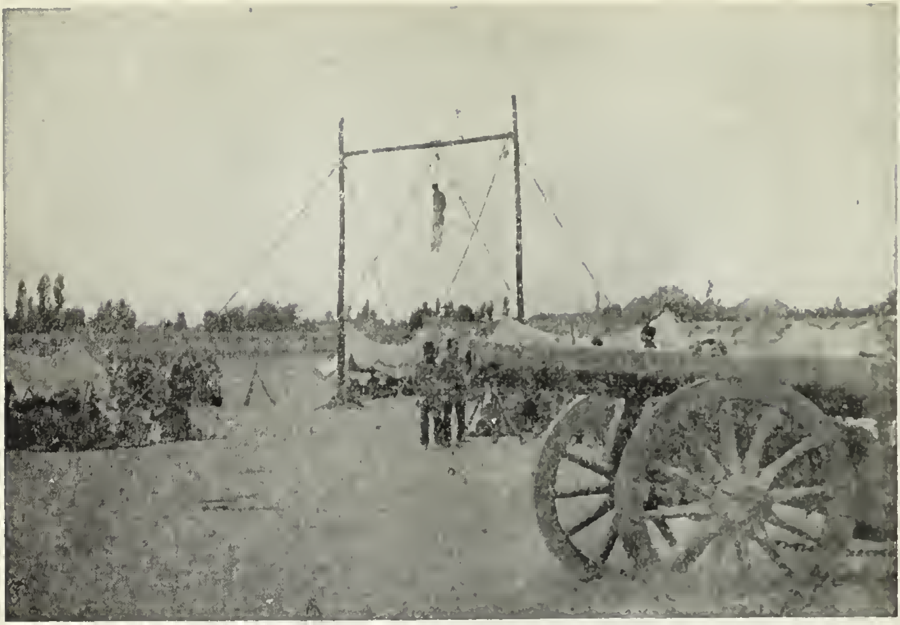
"I 'll do that very thing," Ladew asserted. "I 'll tell him that we 've come half-way round the world to see the Peacock Throne, and that, as his officials won't permit us to see it, we are wiring him for permission. And I 'll bet that we would get it, too. Of course, we could word the message in a way that would be friendly without being too familiar."

"Well, wait until we 've seen the prime minister," I urged him. "Give him a chance to do the right thing before you trouble the shah."

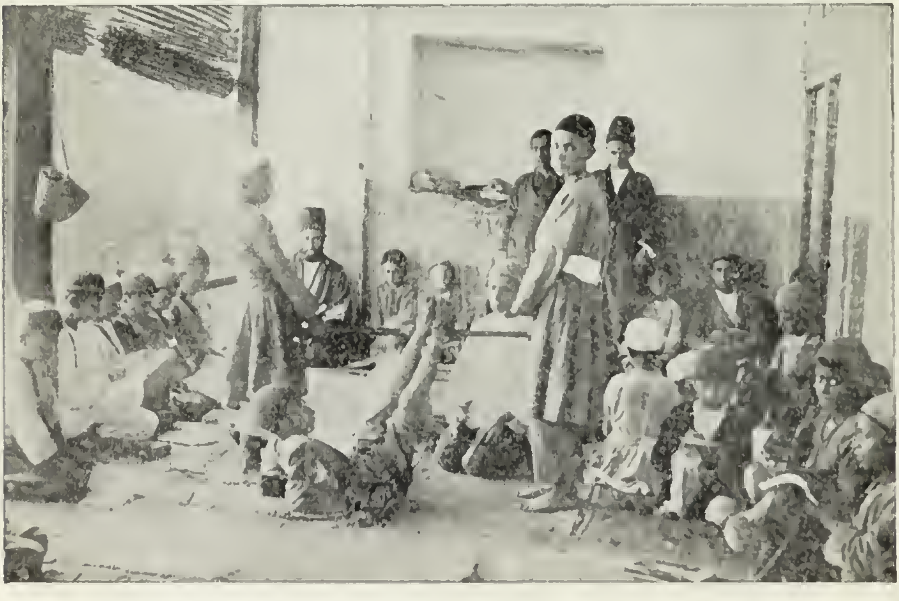
That afternoon we were entertained at tea by the Khavan-es-Saltaneh, who had just accepted for a second time the premiership of Persia. As we were taking our departure after an hour's discussion of Persian politics and the inevitable



The Peacock Throne. The *Takhte Tavoos*, the world-famous chair of state of the shahs of Persia, was brought to Tehran after the loot of Delhi. It resembles an old-fashioned bed, the entire fabric being overlaid with a plating of gold, which is exquisitely chiseled and enameled, and is absolutely incrusted with precious stones. When it was in the possession of the Grand Mogul it was estimated as being worth some thirty millions of dollars. It remains an object of surpassing beauty, an exquisite example of Oriental workmanship.



An execution on the *Maidan* in Tehran. The bright red framework, which I at first mistook for a children's swing or a foot-ball goal, proved, upon investigation, to be a gallows.



Pupils in Persian schools receive the reward of disobedience on the soles of their feet with a rattan instead of on the seat of their trousers with a slipper.

tea, ice-cream, and cakes, he asked me, by way of being polite, if there was anything that he could do for us.

"There is, your Highness," I answered promptly. "We should like permission to see the *Takhte Tavoos*—the Peacock Throne."

"If you are really anxious to see it I have no doubt that it can be arranged," he said amiably, making a notation on his desk-pad. "But I am afraid that you will be disappointed in it," he added.

He regarded our request with the same amused tolerance, I suppose, with which an American would regard the request of a foreign guest to be shown some Indians. There *are* Indians in America, of course, but they rarely live up to the mental pictures which foreigners have drawn of them.

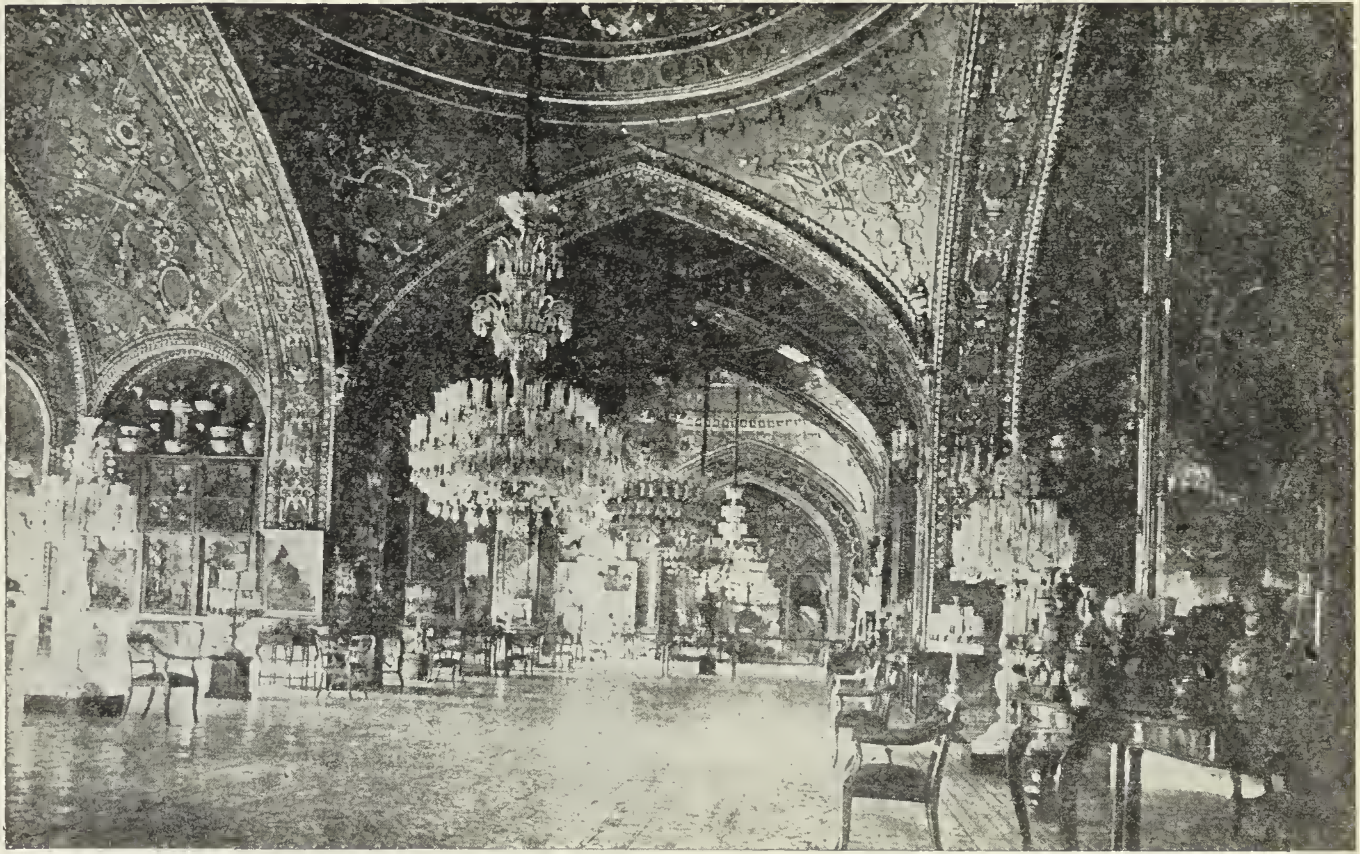
That evening a messenger from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs brought word that, if we would present ourselves at the palace at three o'clock the following afternoon, the treasure-room would be opened for us by special command.

The nucleus of old Tehran is the Ark, or citadel, whose high, battlemented walls inclose a congeries of offices, barracks, arsenals, stables, corridors, courtyards, kiosks, lakes, and gardens, the whole comprising the city palace of the King of Kings. To reach the Palace of the Ark one crosses the Place des Canons, containing a curious collection of ancient cannon, some of which date from the reign of Nadir Shah, who brought them back from his victorious campaign in India after the sack of Delhi. One of these ancient pieces of artillery, known as the Pearl Cannon from the fact that its muzzle was once ornamented with a band of pearls, possesses a curious significance for criminals, as tradition has decreed that evil-doers and debtors may claim immunity from arrest as long as they remain on the low platform which supports the massive weapon, like those fugitives of the Middle Ages who found sanctuary in certain monasteries and shrines. Imagine the criminals of New York clinging to a captured German cannon in Times Square and defying the police and detectives to arrest them!

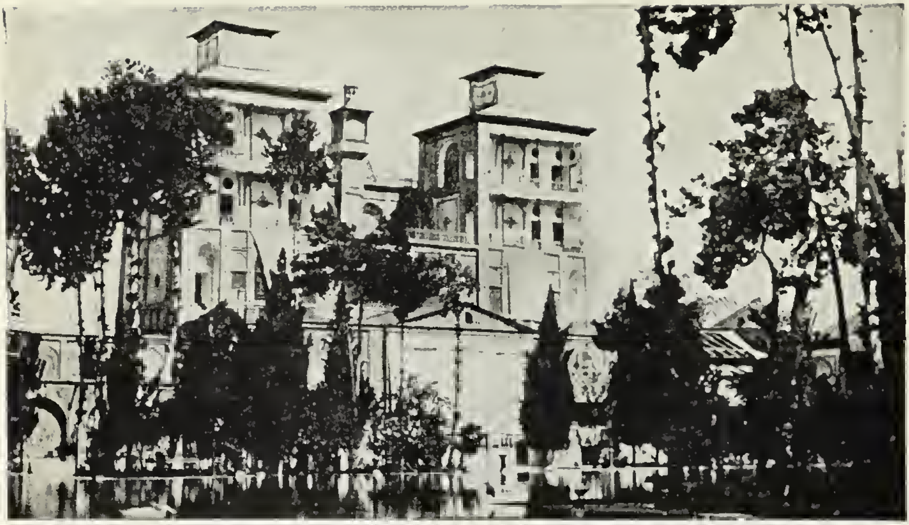
Leaving on the left the ornate Bank of Persia, with its picturesque façade of pink and blue and yellow porcelains, one passes through a charming gate known as the Nagara-khaneh, and so into the Diamond Street, a short thoroughfare, bordered with cypress-trees, which leads to a little-used entrance of the royal inclosure, the front of which is set with mirrors, which give the effect of diamonds when the sun shines upon them. On the lofty gallery above the Nagara-khaneh is played each day, at the rising and setting of the sun, that strange, barbaric fanfare known as "the music of a thousand years." This salute to the sun is a privilege of the shahs of Persia which goes back into the Dark Ages, probably to the Zoroastrian kings. The instruments used are horns of enormous proportions, whose hoarse, reverberating roar is broken by the rattle of kettle-drums and the crash of cymbals, thus producing a cacophony of sound which even the most fertile-minded of our jazz kings never dreamed of.

The Palace of the Ark is outwardly indistinguishable as such. One entrance, to be sure, opens on a small square where coachmen in high fur caps drowse the sunny days away on the boxes of their droshkies. But we knew the ropes, for Hutchings and I had been to the palace a week before for an audience with the crown prince, and the gate we made for was in an alley bounded by high mud walls. Here lounged a score of unkempt, unshaven soldiers of the Cossack Brigade in faded blue uniforms much the worse for dirt and shaggy caps of white sheepskin, who regarded us with some uncertainty. But we wore hats, which throughout the beturbaned East marks the wearer as of a certain degree of consequence, and a mention of the fact that the minister of the household was expecting us did the rest. The guard hastily fell in and presented arms in a fashion which should have brought a blush of shame to the cheek of their drill-master, and we departed for the mysterious inner recesses of the palace under the ciceronage of a eunuch so cadaverous that his black frock-coat flapped about him as he walked as on a scarecrow.

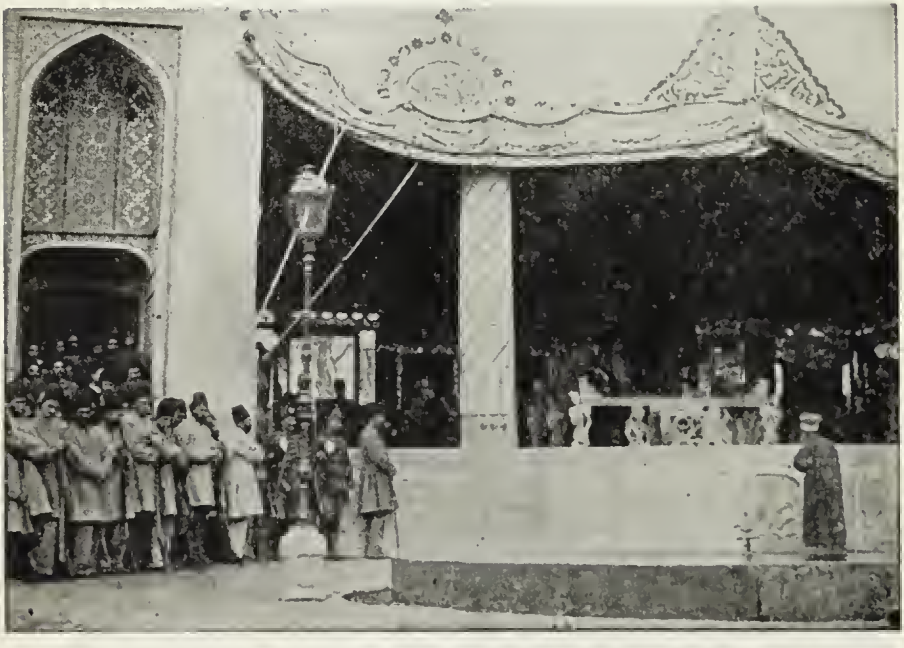
Following our wraith-like guide through an interminable series of tunnel-like passages, calcimined in bright blue and tastily touched up here and there with dashes of vermillion, and across numerous small courtyards where barefooted retainers in coats of faded scarlet slept peacefully with their backs against the wall, we emerged at length into an enormous rectangular courtyard, fully two hundred yards in length, down the axis of which ran a tank, or pool, lined with tiles of turquoise blue and bordered on either side by broad promenades of tessellated marble. At the farther end of the pool rose, from a low terrace of white marble, a most curious structure—a sort of cross between those open-air theaters one sees at amusement-parks and one of the Oriental buildings at the San Francisco Exposition. It was two stories in height, and every square foot of its façade was incrusted with glazed tiles in many colors, interspersed with mirrors. The most engaging feature of the building, however, was the *talar* in its center. The *talar* is a great loggia,



The treasure-room in the imperial palace at Tehran. In the recess at the far end of this great apartment stands the Peacock Throne. Enormous crystal chandeliers hang from the ceiling, and it is crowded with the most amazing collection of junk that I have ever seen.



The Palace of the Shahs. On the east side of the *Gulistan*, "the place of roses," rises the *Shems-el-Emaret*, or Sun of the Palaces, in whose lofty apartments is the *enderoun*, or quarters of the women.



In a great loggia known as the *talar*—a sort of cross between those open-air theaters one sees at amusement-parks and one of the Oriental buildings at the San Francisco Exposition—the King of Kings, seated on the marble throne, holds his public audiences.

raised four or five feet above the ground but rising itself through the second story of the roof, the outer edge of which it helps to support by means of two tall, spirally fluted columns of white marble, which had been brought—Heaven knows how, in this railroadless land!—from the distant ruins of Persepolis. The resemblance to a theater was still further heightened by the great canvas curtain, elaborately stenciled, which hung from the top of the *talar,* and which could be raised or lowered, by means of cords, like a curtain in a playhouse. Near the front of the *talar,* between the supporting columns, stood the *Takht-i-Marmar,* or Marble Throne, a low platform of translucent marble supported by caryatides and lions. Here, seated on a pile of cushions in the Oriental fashion, the shah holds his *salaams* or public audiences, the diplomatic corps in their brilliant uniforms, and the members of his Government in the lambskin caps and embroidered robes which are the court dress of Persia, being assembled on the terraces below the throne. When the massed bands in their scarlet jackets burst into the imperial anthem, and the King of Kings, blazing with diamonds, ascends the Marble Throne, the effect is all that the most captious of stage-managers could ask for. All that is needed to complete the ensemble is a few diving beauties for the pool and a well drilled chorus of Persian houris.

Leaving the court of the *talar* we passed by devious ways—what tales of cruelty and bloodshed this labyrinth of high-walled passages and winding corridors might tell!—into the *Gulistan,* "the place of roses"—a lovely spot, where fountains spread sheets of rippling coolness, where crystal streams in channels lined with turquoise tiles run between lawns as green and smooth as velvet, where marble-girt lagoons reflect like burnished mirrors the green lace of the trees and the cloudless azure sky, and where, behind great masses of flowers, rows of stately cypress find an enchanting background in the palace walls, which are covered from ground to eaves with scenes of war, love, and the chase done in tiles of such exquisite pattern and color that they have all the appearance of enamel. On the waters of the numerous lagoons swans float lazily; peacocks strut across the greensward; bulbuls warble in the tree-tops; the air is heavy with the fragrance of roses.

But, though the general effect is charming, it does not bear too close an inspection, for many of the tiles have fallen from the walls, leaving unsightly patches of bare plaster, while the execrable lapses of taste which so frequently characterize the Oriental are illustrated by the ugly lamp-posts, the rococo summer-houses, and the cast-iron figures of stags and greyhounds with which the garden is littered. All along the marble basins, where the veiled beauties of the *enderoun* drag their silken robes among the ever-blooming Persian roses, stand gas-lamps of the hideous pattern familiar in American cities a generation ago, supported by cast-iron figures of undraped ladies, which have sagged from the perpendicular, however, until they have a distinctly inebriated appearance. I was particularly fascinated, however, by two ponderous Percherons of cast-iron, heavily coated with gilt, on whose broad backs two boys, likewise of iron, clad only in overalls and galluses, were balanced precariously. When the gardener turned a key, streams of water suddenly shot from the youngsters' pursed-up lips, giving the beholder the impression that they had been taken violently seasick.

On the east side of the *Gulistan,* screened by a fringe of cypresses and poplars, rises the *Shems-el-Emaret,* or Sun of the Palaces, its twin campaniles, with a slender clock-tower between, covered with blue and yellow tiles. In these lofty apartments is the *enderoun,* or quarters of the women, who, concealed behind porcelain grilles, can watch the comings and goings in the *Gulistan,* and, on the other side, look down upon the animated scenes at the entrance of the bazaars. The state apartments, whose walls and ceilings are entirely covered with mirrors cut and set in the shape of diamonds, are connected with the *enderoun* by a long, lofty, glass-roofed corridor known as the Orangery, where, when the ground outside is white with snow, the King of Kings can stroll beside a running stream under boughs heavy with golden fruit. At the farther end of the Orangery is the jealously guarded Porte des Voluptés, through which no one may pass save the shah and his eunuchs, for it leads to the *enderoun*. But the present ruler, Sultan Ahmad Shah, a youth of twenty-five, is unmarried, and there are, I believe, comparatively few women in the imperial *enderoun*—few, at least, when compared with the galaxies of female beauty assembled there during the reigns of his more amorous predecessors.

On the second floor of that portion of the Palace of the Ark which overlooks the *Gulistan*, reached by a broad and imposing stairway, is the imperial treasure-room, or, as it is now more commonly called, the museum. That it is rarely opened was evidenced by the fact that when we arrived it was fastened by means of large wax seals, which the minister of the household broke in our presence. It is a room of imposing proportions, whose beauty is marred, however, by the ornateness of its decorations, particularly the thousands and thousands of mirrors set in its walls and ceilings. Enormous crystal chandeliers hang from the ceiling, massive candelabra of the same material are ranged along the walls, and the floor is thickly strewn with priceless silken carpets, constituting a fortune in themselves. Here, as in the other rooms of the palace, the carpets were generally in pairs, and, though the minister referred contemptuously to most of them as modern and therefore unworthy of great praise, the designs and colorings were as soft and delicate as those in a length of Pompadour satin or a piece of rare brocade. Otherwise the great room is crowded with the most amazing collection of junk that I have ever seen gathered under one roof: ponderous vases of Sèvres and Dresden, gifts to the shahs from various European sovereigns; pictures in Italian mosaic of the eruption of Vesuvius and the Roman Colosseum; elephants' tusks mounted in gold and silver; embroidered sofa-pillows bearing such loyal sentiments as "God Bless Our Gracious Sovereign"; a terrestrial globe made of precious stones, the seas mapped in sapphires, the continents in emeralds and rubies, and Persia in diamonds; cumbersome desk-sets of gold, silver, malachite, lapis lazuli, ivory, olive-wood; a collection of knives, forks, combs, umbrellas, canes, each article neatly labeled and arranged in glass cases in orderly array; a wash bowl and pitcher made from postage-stamps; priceless Chinese porcelains of the Ming period side by side with dinner-services of very ordinary European china; ornately bound albums containing photographs taken during Muzaffer-ed-Din's periodic European junkets; some stuffed birds of paradise, rather moth-eaten; swords with jeweled hilts and shotguns and rifles, their stocks set in precious stones; carved and inlaid chests, which, in the old days, were heaped to the brim with pearls from the Persian Gulf and turquoises from the imperial mines; mechanical toys of every kind and description; addresses of welcome from various European municipalities (for the shahs always spent lavishly on their periodic trips abroad); and clocks of every size, model, and material, from gilt-and-glass extravagances incrusted with jewels to those atrocities in the form of a Swiss chalet, which indicate the hour by the door's suddenly flying open and a little wooden bird's squawking "Cuckoo! Cuckoo! Cuckoo!" Now I understood why our requests to visit the treasure-room had been met with excuses and evasions.

But at the far end of the room, hidden away in a recess so dimly lighted that it is scarcely visible, is the most beautiful object in all Persia—

the world-famous Takhte Tavoos—the Peacock Throne. It is not in the form of a chair, as I had imagined, but resembles rather an old-fashioned bed, about eight feet by five, supported by six curved and massive legs, two steps, decorated with salamanders, giving access to the platform on which the shah reclines in Oriental fashion, supported by a bolster-cushion and surrounded by pillows. In order that I may not be charged with exaggeration, let me quote from the description of Lord Curzon, who was afforded exceptional facilities for examining the throne:

> The entire fabric is overlaid with a plating of gold, which is exquisitely chiseled and enameled, and is absolutely incrusted with precious stones, among which rubies and emeralds are the most prominent. An elegant balustrade containing inscriptions in panels runs round, and the lofty back, which is one mass of gems, rises to a point in the center whereupon is fixed a circular star of diamonds, with scintillating rays, made to revolve by a piece of mechanism at the back. On either side of the star are two bejeweled birds, perched on the edges of the back-frame and facing each other.

The value of the Peacock Throne as it stands to-day can only be conjectured. When it was in the possession of the Grand Mogul it was estimated as being worth some thirty millions of dollars, but since then important portions of it, such as the canopy of pearls, have disappeared. Whether, indeed, it is the veritable throne of the

Grand Mogul has long been a subject of controversy, but, be that as it may, it remains an exquisite example of Oriental workmanship, an object of surpassing beauty.

CHAPTER IX

POLITICS AND PETROLEUM IN PERSIA

PERSIA is the China of the Middle East. Like China she possesses great undeveloped natural resources; she has long been cursed with a weak and frequently corrupt Government; and her sovereignty has been ruthlessly and repeatedly violated by avaricious and unscrupulous neighbors. Already occupying fifth place among the oil-producing nations of the world, with an area greater than that of all the countries of Europe west of the Rhine and the Alps put together, but with a population no larger than that of the Low Countries, she has long offered irresistible temptation to the powers that prey. From the standpoint of natural security, Persia has two great weaknesses: her geographic position and her wealth in oil. It is her misfortune to lie athwart Britain's road to India, while at the same time forming a barrier between the Muscovite and his long-sought outlet to the Warm Water. And her oil production, it is asserted by experts, when properly developed, may equal that of the United

States. During the last two decades, therefore, the ancient empire has been ground between two millstones, the British greed for oil and the Russian lust for land.

The history of British and Russian activities in Persia forms a narrative of arrogance, deceit, intimidation, intrigue, bribery, and corruption almost without parallel in recent times. These two empires, utilizing pretexts so flimsy as to be ridiculous, or, as has often happened, no pretexts at all, have violated Persian neutrality, overawed Persian Governments, dissolved Persian parliaments, debauched Persian officials, expelled Persia's foreign advisers, and maintained armies on Persian soil. That these actions have provoked no protests from without and have attracted so little attention may be explained by the fact that Persia, with no railways and no important seaports and a very limited intercourse with foreign nations, lies immured in the heart of Asia, down a dark and unfrequented alley, as it were, where her despoilers have been able to work their will on her with the assurance that scant heed would be paid to the few faint outcries from their victim which might reach the ears of the preoccupied outside world.

Properly to understand the great game that American and British concession seekers are playing in Persia, and the immensity of the interests at stake, it is necessary to realize what an important part petroleum plays in the politics of that country and promises to play in shaping its destinies. The Persian oil-fields cover an enormous area. Outside of the Hamadan oil region, which has but a secondary importance, the oil deposits form two main zones, one in the north and the other in the southwest of the empire. The northern zone, which is about four hundred miles long, starts in the province of Khorassan and, passing through the provinces of Astrabad, Mazanderan, and Gilan, reaches Azerbaijan, on the frontiers of Asiatic Turkey. This zone forms a natural continuation of the Caucasian (Russian) naphtha region of Baku and the Tchelekea islands. The southwestern oil zone is in length more than twice that of North Persia. It begins in the neighborhood of Kasr-i-Shirin, on the 'Iraq border, passes to the areas south of Kirtchuk, and extends as far as Bandar-Abbas and Kishim, being a continuation of the Mosul oil-fields.

It was not until 1901, when the Tehran Government granted to an Englishman, Mr. W. K. d'Arcy, a concession for the exploitation of the fields in the southwestern part of the empire, that Persia entered the oil world. At first, however, her rôle as an oil-producing country was negligible, and up to 1916 the extraction of oil in that country was confined to a very modest figure. In the years that immediately followed it increased a little, however, attaining an average of nearly seven million barrels per annum. By 1920 the output of the Persian oil-fields had risen to twelve million barrels, this figure being increased by 20 per cent in 1921. So at present Persia occupies fifth place among the oil-producing countries of the world, her output surpassing that of Rumania and Galicia. These figures are, however, very far from reflecting adequately the latent possibilities of the oil-fields in the dominions of the shah, the reports of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company indicating that the construction of refineries, railways, and pipe-lines would be followed by results equaling those attained by the oil industry in the United States, which normally produces about 65 per cent of the world's production. With these highly significant figures before us, let us go back into the history of Anglo-Russo-Persian relations a few years.

Before 1907 Russia and Great Britain had in Persia an endless bone of contention, over which they growled at each other like angry dogs. The statesmen in St. Petersburg dreamed of pushing the frontiers of the czar southward to the Persian Gulf, thus giving Russia a much-needed outlet on the Warm Water, while the diplomats of Downing Street saw in this ambition the long-predicted Russian invasion of India. So it became a game of move and checkmate on the chess-board of Middle Asia. Russia pushed a spur from her military railway in Transcaspia southward to Kushkinski Post, on the northern border of Afghanistan, and England answered it by extending her Indian railways to New Chaman, on the Ameer's southern frontier. If Russia moved an army-corps into the Caucasus, England sent warships up the Persian Gulf. But it was realized that this sort of thing, if persisted in, would inevitably lead to war, so, in 1907, the two powers signed an agreement whereby their respective "spheres of influence" in Persia would be clearly demarcated, and the cause of their antagonism thus removed. By this convention the empire of the shahs was divided into three zones with as little compunction as a pair of hungry boys would divide a stolen pie. The northern zone was the Russian sphere of influence; the southern was the British; and the central was neutral, though from that it is not to be assumed that even there Persia could do as she pleased. This she quickly found out. Persia had in her employ at this time, as financial adviser, an American, Mr. W. Morgan Shuster, who held the title of treasurer-general. During the comparatively brief time that he had been in the country Mr. Shuster had reorganized its finances, had instituted an equitable and productive system of taxation, and had organized an efficient force of gendarmerie for the collection of taxes and customs. Under his tutelage, Persia was fairly on the way to becoming a prosperous and well governed nation. But a prosperous and well governed Persia was the last thing England and Russia desired. They wanted a country too weak and demoralized to effectively oppose them. So it was decided that Shuster must go. The Persians, to whom the American treasurer-general had come to stand for their national salvation, insisted that he should stay, whereupon England and Russia served an ultimatum on the Government at Tehran demanding his immediate dismissal. And, as their ultimatum was backed up by bayonets, there was nothing for the Persians to do but accede to it. High-handed and illegal? Certainly. But the cynical statesmen in London and St. Petersburg did not let that concern them. They had long subscribed to

> . . . the good old rule, the simple plan,
> That he shall take who has the power
> And he shall keep who can.

A few months after the outbreak of the World War, when the conflagration was rapidly spreading toward Persia's borders, the Government of the shah declared its neutrality. But Britain and Russia, convinced that now was the time to rivet their fetters on Persia while the attention of the rest of the world was occupied by the mighty events taking place in Europe, paid as scant heed to this declaration as they had to all the other rights of Persia.[1] And, by virtue of the fact that the only effective armed forces in Persia were under British and Russian control, the Government at Tehran was helpless. Upon the signing of the convention of 1907 the Russians had organized in their sphere of influence the so-called Cossack Brigade, a force of Persians with Russian officers; and, soon after the beginning of the war, the British followed suit by organizing in their sphere a similar force, with British officers and Indian non-commissioned officers, known as the South Persia Rifles. And, before the war had been in progress many months, large forces of Russian and British troops were thrown into Persia to check the Turco-German advance from the west.

Meanwhile a new Madjless[2] had been elected, and this legislative body, whose career had been systematically hampered by Russia's avowed hostility to any form of popular government in Persia, was duly opened by the shah. The Madjless continued in session until November, 1915, when the imminent occupation of Tehran by Russian troops, a large force of which was then only fifteen miles from the capital, and their threat of closing the Madjless by force, as had been done on a previous occasion by bombardment, forced that body to disperse, with the intention of meeting again in some Persian city which was not under the menace of Russian guns. The shah was only induced to remain in Tehran by the assurances given by the Russian and British ministers that his capital would not be occupied. This did not prevent Russian troops, however, from overrunning the country and surrounding the capital. And this, mind you, when the Allies were engaged in a war against autocracy and militarism!

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[1] The Russians were the first to violate Persian neutrality, followed by the Turks and the British.

[2] The national assembly of Persia.

Having thus brought about the temporary dissolution of the Madjless, the Russians proceeded to bring pressure to bear upon the shah, forcing him to appoint as prime minister a man named Sepahsalar, or Sepahdar Azam, a notorious reactionary and Russophile. Now Sepahsalar, who was a wealthy Persian landlord, claimed that years before he had obtained from the shah a firman giving him the right to prospect for oil on his own estates in the province of Mazanderan.

When, in 1916, he became prime minister by the grace of Russia, he granted a so-called ''executive concession'' for the extraction of oil in three and a fraction of the five northern provinces to a Russian subject named Khoshtaria, who was a native of Georgia, in the Caucasus.[1] Thus the ''liquid gold'' of North Persia passed into Muscovite hands.

A similar concession, covering all the rest of the empire, was already held by the Anglo-Persian Oil Company, a British concern, whose holdings had been mainly derived from the grant obtained in 1901 through the enterprise of Mr. d'Arcy. Through the foresight of Lloyd George, who early recognized the important part which oil was destined to play in the great conflict, the British Government, during the early stages of the war, obtained a controlling interest in the Anglo-Persian Oil Company, which, up to that time, had been a private enterprise. But in March, 1917, came the Russian Revolution. The Government of the czar was swept from power almost overnight, and the Anglo-Russian partnership, established by the convention of 1907, came to an abrupt end. Khoshtaria then attempted to sell the concession[1] for the oil-fields of North Persia which he had obtained from Sepahsalar, offering it in turn to groups in France and Holland, but, owing to the circumstances under which he had obtained it, his title was beclouded and he could not effect a sale. He eventually succeeded, however, in disposing of his so-called concession to a company known as the North Persia Oils Limited, a subsidiary of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company, for a sum that, I understand, was not far from $1,400,000. Whether the British purchasers acquired anything at all for this very substantial sum is open to considerable doubt, however, for the Persian Government denies absolutely the validity of Khoshtaria's claims.

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[1] This so-called concession has never been ratified by the Persian Parliament.

As soon as Persia was relieved of foreign troops and foreign pressure—the British troops were not withdrawn from Persia until 1921—the Madjless was reconvened. The reason this body had not met for several years lay, as I have already explained, not in the suspension or suppression of the constitutional laws of Persia, or in the unwillingness of the shah to summon the chamber, but to circumstances, wholly beyond Persia's control, resulting from the violation of Persian neutrality by the warring nations and from undue influence exercised by them to prevent the free expression of opinion through the representatives of the people. The first important act of the Madjless, upon reconvening, was unanimously to emphasize the illegality and invalidity of the Khoshtaria concession, which had been obtained under duress and without the sanction of Parliament (a fact of which the Anglo-Persian Company, in purchasing it from Khoshtaria must have been aware), and to vote for granting the oil-rights in the northern provinces to the Standard Oil Company of New Jersey. The concession[1] thus authorized (November 22, 1921) was to be for fifty years, with an interest of not less than 15 per cent of the gross value of oil produced secured to the Persian Government, though I might add parenthetically that this figure was never agreed to by the Standard Oil Company. This arrangement was probably more advantageous for Persia than the southern concession held by the Anglo-Persian Oil Company, which entitles the Government to 16 per cent of the net production. In return for this northern concession, which embraced about one hundred and twenty thousand square miles—a territory exceeding in area the whole of Italy—the Standard Oil Company was to lend the Persian Government five million dollars, payment of this loan to be secured by the royalties due the Persian Government from the Anglo-Persian Oil Company.

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[1] It has been held that this was not really a concession, but rather a legislative direction addressed to the executive branch of the Government.

But the British, alarmed at the prospect of a powerful competitor's entering the Persian field, lost no time in taking steps to avert this threatened impairment of their monopoly in that region. The British legation at Tehran protested immediately against the action taken by the Madjless, asserting that the rights to the northern oil-fields had long belonged to the Russian subject, Khoshtaria, who had sold them to the Anglo-Persian Oil Company; while the British embassy in Washington lodged a similar protest with the Standard Oil Company and the Department of State. To these protests the Persian Government replied by stating that the grant to Khoshtaria was irregular and illegal, as no concession could be taken in Persia by a foreign company without the approval of the Madjless.

Negotiations looking toward the reconciliation of the conflicting desires of the different oil companies and the Persian Government are now understood to be taking place.

When the Anglo-Russian convention of 1907 was signed, the clique which was then in control of British foreign policy believed in a general rapprochement with Russia, and the scheme of coöperation in Persia was a part of this policy. For it was felt in Downing Street that it was the part of wisdom to divide the Persian loot rather than risk a conflict with the Bear. But after the World War was over the situation had completely changed. The czar was in an unknown grave and the Muscovite statesmen who had planned the dismemberment of Persia had either fallen before the volleys of Lenin's execution-squads or had fled the country. Russia lay prostrate under the heel of Bolshevism. She had ceased to be an active factor in world politics. Her international status had disappeared for the time being. The impotence of Russia obviously presented a golden opportunity to her former ally—an opportunity which those who were now directing Britain's foreign policy were not long in seizing. Acting on the assumption that the Anglo-Russian convention was no longer in force, Sir Percy Cox,[1] the new British minister to Persia, immediately upon his arrival in Tehran set about the negotiation of an Anglo-Persian agreement, which was finally signed in August, 1921. This agreement merely put into operation everything that was comprised in the demands which had been presented jointly by Russia and England during the negotiations of 1916. The only difference was

[1] Now high commissioner in Mesopotamia.

that Russia was eliminated and that England proposed to go it alone. By this agreement England undertook to respect the independence and territorial integrity of Persia, but was to establish a virtual control over the Persian Government by reorganizing its finances and its army, in the mean time arranging for a loan that would enable the Government at Tehran to carry on. In short, Persia was to become a British protectorate, in fact, if not in name, with the same measure of independence, and no more, that Britain usually permits to those nations that she takes under her protection. And, best of all from the standpoint of Downing Street, England did not have to divide with Russia. Every cloud, even the cloud of Bolshevism, has its silver lining.

Now, however, questionable the morality of this proceeding, it was, when judged by the standards of world politics, perfectly correct, or would have been correct if the assent of the Persian cabinet had been obtained by proper means. But even international diplomacy, cynical as it is, does not condone bribery—at least, when it is found out. For it has been charged in Parliament and the Persian Madjless and in several leading London papers—and has not been denied—that the British Foreign Office bribed three prominent Persian ministers with a sum of £131,000 to sign the Anglo-Persian agreement. It is further alleged that the Foreign Office improperly included this sum in the "loan" recoverable from Persia. In other words, England sought to recover from the Persian people the sum which she had used in debauching their ministers and effecting the betrayal of their country![1]

The publication of the circumstances which resulted in the signing of this agreement aroused furious indignation in Persia, and a wide-spread agitation began for its repeal. This culminated in a *coup d'état,* effected by the Persian Cossacks, which elevated to power in the Government a man by the name of Seyyed Zia-ed-Din, one of whose first acts was the abrogation of the Anglo-Persian agreement. By that time, too, the British themselves realized that they had overstepped themselves in forcing the agreement on the Persians, and the Foreign Office welcomed, or pretended to welcome, the opportunity thus afforded to wash its hands of the whole unsavory matter. Zia-ed-Din, while ostensibly anti-British, soon fell under the suspicion of some of his colleagues and followers, and an accusation of being secretly pro-British was made against him, which led to his overthrow in June, 1921. He was succeeded by

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[1] See "Recent Happenings in Persia," by the Hon. J. M. Balfour.

Riza Khan, who, as minister of war and commander-in-chief, is the virtual dictator of Persia and the strongest man that that distracted country has known in many years. He is credited with being a bitter opponent of all that is British, and, as a result of his influence, and of the distrust and detestation of England which animates all classes of the population, British influence in Persia is almost at the vanishing-point to-day.

Riza Khan, or, to give him his official designation, the Sardar Sipah, has shown himself a really able man, as is proved by his remarkable accomplishment in building up the Persian army from the distinctly unpromising material that was all that he had to hand. Though the army undeniably profited from the extended Russian and British occupation of Persia, Riza has now succeeded in throwing off all foreign influence and has combined all the armed forces of the empire into one. What were formerly the Cossack Division, the gendarmerie, and other units are now welded into a single army, of which the Sardar Sipah is commander-in-chief; and all foreign appellations, which were in general use under the Russian and Swedish military instructors, have been abolished and replaced by purely Persian titles. He has been confronted by many serious obstacles other than those of reorganization, however, for tribesmen and robber bands have taken advantage of the weakness of the central government to loot and plunder, and many of the principal roads have been insecure. In addition to these highway robberies, the Kurdish rebel chieftain, Ismail Agha Simko, has been on the war-path for several years and has defied all the Government's efforts to subdue him. When we were in Persia the Sardar Sipah was organizing a fresh campaign against Simko, but the latter, who has been joined by a number of Turkish officers, deserters, and adventurers, has thus far been able to hold his own, though quite content to keep within his own ground to the south and west of Lake Urumia. There have also been sporadic troubles in the province of Gilan, where a Jungalee chief named Seyyid Jalal has come off second best in several encounters with the government forces. If the Sardar Sipah can succeed in crushing Simko, in the Urumia district, as well as the Jungalee bands, which, backed apparently by the Bolshevists, are active along the shores of the Caspian, Persia should enjoy a state of law and order to which it has long been a stranger.[1]

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[1] Since this was written Simko has been defeated and driven into Turkish territory.

In the course of a long and very candid conversation with Riza Khan I asked him what, in his opinion, was the most pressing need of Persia.

"A foreign loan," he answered promptly.

"And what would you do with it?" I asked him.

"Treble the strength of the army."

"In that case," I replied, "I am afraid that you will find great difficulty in borrowing money in the United States. Our financiers have become very chary of lending money for military purposes. They believe that the world has had enough of war."

"But what are we to do?" he demanded. "The country must be made safe, and it cannot be made safe without an adequate army."

"Why not establish an air force?" I suggested. "You could do it for a fraction of what it would cost to increase the army to the strength you propose, and, as the British have learned in Mesopotamia and the French in Syria, a few airplanes are far more effective in putting down revolts and keeping order in railroadless regions than large bodies of troops. You could buy all the airplanes you needed for a few hundred pounds apiece from the surplus stocks of the American, British, and French Governments, and in all those countries there are scores of aviators who served throughout the war and who would jump at a chance to fl in the Persian service for, say, fifty pounds a month and their keep.

"What chance would Simko or Jelal or the Bakhtiari chieftains have against aircraft?" I continued, seeing that the minister was distinctly interested in the discussion. "You could bomb a rebellious village out of existence in an hour. You could make your authority respected from the gulf to the Caspian. Nor would you have to consider the question of transport, which is now, I understand, one of your greatest problems. And airplanes would have a commercial as well as a military value. One of Persia's greatest weaknesses lies in its lack of adequate means of communication. Has it occurred to you, Excellency, that a plane could carry the post from Tehran to Baghdad in about six hours, whereas it now takes at least a week, and usually longer, for a letter to make the same journey? At Baghdad the Persian mails could be transferred to the British planes, which fly from Baghdad to Cairo in eight hours, and from Cairo it is less than four days by mail-steamer and express-train to England. Such a service as I have outlined would bring Tehran within less than a week of Paris and London."

As I sketched this ambitious but by no means impracticable scheme the eyes of the dictator glistened, for he has imagination. For the next half-hour he interrogated me as to speed, personnel, cost of maintenance, and the like, and I answered his questions as best I was able, helped out from time to time by Captain Jedlicka, the American military attaché, who accompanied me. That my plan has been given serious consideration by the Persian military authorities is suggested by the fact that, since my return from Persia, I have been informed that the Government at Tehran has instructed its diplomatic representatives abroad to collect and forward immediately all possible information relative to aviation. So, the next time I visit the dominions of the shah, I may make the long journey by air, at a hundred miles an hour, instead of by car and caravan.

The truth of the matter is that Persia, rich though she is in natural resources, can make little material progress until she is provided with railways. I am convinced, moreover, that, despite the fact that they would necessarily traverse great stretches of sparsely populated country, such lines eventually would prove a profitable investment, for, save in crossing the Zagros ranges, where numerous tunnels would be required, there would be no serious engineering difficulties, while on the great steppes of central and southern Persia a highway of steel could be built at very moderate cost. I believe that the first railway requirement of Persia is a great north-and-south system. This would start at Resht, on the Caspian, pass through Kazvin, Tehran, Ispahan, Yezd, Shiraz, and Bushire, having its southern terminus at Bandar Abbas, on the straits of Ormuz, at the mouth of the Persian Gulf. The second step in a railway program would probably be the linking of this north-and-south system, through Hamadan, Kermanshah, and Kirin, with the Mesopotamian line which runs from Tiaruq, on the Persian frontier, down to Baghdad. Thirdly, to push a line from Bandar Abbas along the shores of the Indian Ocean to the frontier of Baluchistan, where it would connect with the British Indian system, thus providing a through rail route from Europe to India, for the much-advertised Baghdad Railway, when completed, will get no nearer to India than the head of the Persian Gulf. Lastly, an extension of the existing Russian line which connects Julfa, in the Caucasus, with Tabriz, in northwestern Persia, to Resht, on the Caspian, where it would link up with the north-and-south trunk line, thereby providing an all-Persian road over which the goods of Russia could be shipped southward to find a market among the teeming millions of India. In the very nature of things it will be many years before the thinly settled wastes of eastern Persia will resound to the hoot of the locomotive, though, when a new era dawns in Muscovy, I see no reason why a branch of the Russian Transcaspian system should not be pushed down to Meshed, the metropolis of northeastern Persia. To those who have not followed as closely as I have the amazing advance on every continent of the railway builder, the railway expansion which I have outlined above may appear impracticable and visionary. But, after what I have seen in other lands far less rich in natural resources than Persia and occupying positions of far less geographic and commercial importance, I am convinced that it will be realized in a much nearer future than most people suppose. British and Russian statesmen, animated by jealousy or fear, may be expected to place obstacles in the path of the iron horse, it is true, but history shows that politics has never succeeded in halting the march of progress for any considerable length of time. And, too, there will be days of doubting and despair, for railways across such a country as Persia cannot be expected to yield dividends from the start; but their builders will be rewarded eventually, just as were the men who laid twin lines of steel through the swamps of equatorial Africa and across our Western plains. All that is needed is a man with the vision, the courage, and the perseverance of a Harriman or a Rhodes.

Government in Persia has been despotic and liberal at the same time. In the old days the shah possessed absolute power, and the political system consisted in the sale of the power which he delegated from the top all the way down, from the prime minister to the village *khoda,* each purchaser recouping himself for his expenditure as quickly as possible by methods of oppression and extortion, for he never knew when he would be dismissed because his post had been sold to some one else. As a result, he had to make money quickly and to do it did not scruple to use the arbitrary powers conferred upon him. This system made no provision for education, communications, public improvements, or any of the other functions of a progressive modern government. Apart from its financial exactions, however, it did allow a great degree of freedom, and from Russia, Turkey, and Afghanistan those who desired some measure of liberty were sure to find it by crossing the border. The old absolutism of the shah is gone, and with it the diffusion of his autocracy among lower officials is going. I was told that the system of obtaining public offices by bribery, and of recovering the bribe by extortion, is steadily, if slowly, disappearing. The granting of the constitution in 1906 and the meetings of the Madjless, even though there have been but five of these in sixteen years, have in part expressed and in part engendered a new spirit of political responsibility. The present Government is, of course, still very loose-jointed and ineffective in comparison with the old system of recognized and regularized corruption, but great progress has been made and there is intelligence enough, if character also can be found, to assure the future of the country under a constitutional and orderly self-government.

The poverty of Persia, which was deep enough before the war, is deeper now. The pay of government officials and army officers is many months in arrears; the cities and villages are filled with idle men and the roads with wanderers who have left no work and are going to none, the problem of unemployment having been made more acute by the hordes of homeless, hopeless refugees who have poured across the border from Russia. It is said that the wrecking of Russia alone has cost Persia more than half of all her trade prosperity, though this, I think, is something of an exaggeration. Nevertheless, the country is not bankrupt. Make no mistake about that. The deficit of 3,000,000 tomans on a proposed expenditure of 19,000,000 and an income of 16,000,000 gives a ratio of revenue to expenditure of 81 per cent as compared with the corresponding ratio of 50 per cent in the French budget for 1920, 36 per cent in the German budget, and 34 per cent in the Italian. Persia, moreover, has no such foreign debt as many of the European nations are staggering under. By the treaty concluded in 1921 between Soviet Russia and Persia, all the indebtedness of the latter to the former was canceled. All that remains is the debt of approximately £6,000,000 to Great Britain. Against this indebtedness and her adverse trade balances, Persia has her enormous natural resources, the greater part of which are entirely undeveloped. Of these as yet she has alienated by concessions only the rich oil-rights in southwestern Persia, which have proved immensely lucrative to the Anglo-Persian Oil Company. The Persian currency has also been saved from debasement, the Government deserving great credit for refusing to take the paper money pathway to apparent prosperity and certain ruin. Furthermore, even though her foreign trade has suffered severely, Persia has escaped the ruinous exchange depreciation of the European countries. During the war the toman, which in normal times had been at par, or a little under par, with the dollar, rose to two dollars, and, when I was in Persia in the spring and summer of 1922, the toman was worth slightly more than ninety cents.

The Government of Persia is confronted by the same problems that face every weak government with large territories and with inadequate means of communication. What it most needs is, first, an honest, firm, and capable central administration; second, the assertion of the central authority in the effective military suppression of disorder and lawlessness; third, a just system of taxation and the effective collection of the taxes imposed; fourth, the improvement of communications; and fourth, an adequate system of education.[1]

An augury of better days for Persia was seen, however, in 1922, when, at the request of the Persian Government, a group of American financial and technical advisers, fourteen in all, headed by Mr. A. C. Millspaugh, former economic adviser of the Department of State, was sent to Tehran. These men, who were carefully selected for their experience and ability, are now serving in executive capacities in the Ministry of Finance. They are to reorganize the customs, institute an equitable system of taxation and tax-collection, introduce modern methods of agriculture, public health, and municipal administration, revise the judiciary system, improve the facilities for education, and, above all else, rehabilitate the finances of the country. For though Persia, as I have already pointed out, is not bankrupt, her finances, on which, after all, everything else depends, are admittedly in a very bad way, and it is safe to say that they will continue to go from bad to worse until they are taken in hand by some one unaffected by the evil traditions of the past, and looking on the problem from a genuinely disinterested standpoint. Even so, Mr. Millspaugh has before him a task to tax the powers and patience of any man. Mr. Shuster tried and, through no fault of his own, failed; and, though some of the difficulties that confronted him have been removed, fresh ones have arisen in their place. If he is to succeed the new adviser will have to possess not only financial talent of no mean order, but a real genius for reading character and handling men. It is difficult to predict whether he will have his greatest difficulties with the democratic element, which wants the millennium to dawn at once on Persia, or with the aristocrats, who have so long been accustomed to having their own way in all matters; with the Madjless, which, like all elective assemblies, is exceedingly jealous of its own prerogatives and resentful of criticism, or with those foreign powers whose designs would best be served by Persia's remaining a weak and submissive nation.

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[1] See the report on Persia presented to the Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church by Mr. Robert E. Speer and Mr. Russell Carter.

It seems to me that the Persians are deserving of greater sympathy and a completer understanding than we of the West have yet given them, if for no other reason than that they are of our own race and color, for Persia, remember, is the Caucasian home land, from which we originally came. For other than historic reasons, moreover, the West is deeply indebted to Persia; not merely for the carpets of Shiraz and the verses of Omar Khayyám, but also for its numberless contributions to the arts and sciences. The Persians are a kindly, courteous, cheerful, patient, hospitable, sympathetic, tolerant, extremely intelligent, and patriotic people, though at the same time indolent, dilatory, apathetic, ignorant, and frequently unscrupulous. Yet, despite their numerous and undeniable shortcomings, there must be a sturdy and determined strain in a people who, though hemmed in by predatory and aggressive nations, have preserved their national integrity and independence for twenty-five hundred years. Behind the Persians is a long history of selfish autocracy, internal jealousy, oppression, and misrule. Around them is a state reeking with ignorance, poverty, superstition, and disease. But before them are vast possibilities, for the future is more promising than it has ever been before, the collapse of Russia and the preoccupation of England having relieved Persia from the haunting fear of external aggression. The regeneration of Persia must come from within, by the development of a new spirit in the Persian people. The road which Persia must travel, if she really seeks regeneration, will be a trying one. What she needs to help her over its rough places is a friend, and no people in the world are asking more earnestly for a friend than the Persians are asking for the friendship of America. Wherever we went we were eagerly questioned as to the likelihood of Persia's receiving American help in the development of her resources, in building roads, or promoting trade. If America would not help them then they had no hope for the future of their country. America ought to help them and can very well do so in ways which will be to Persia's advantage and to her own. Heretofore, however, we have shown more tendency to criticize than to help this bewildered and struggling people. The truth of the matter is that there is too much of the unchanging West in our attitude toward an East that is fast changing beyond recognition.

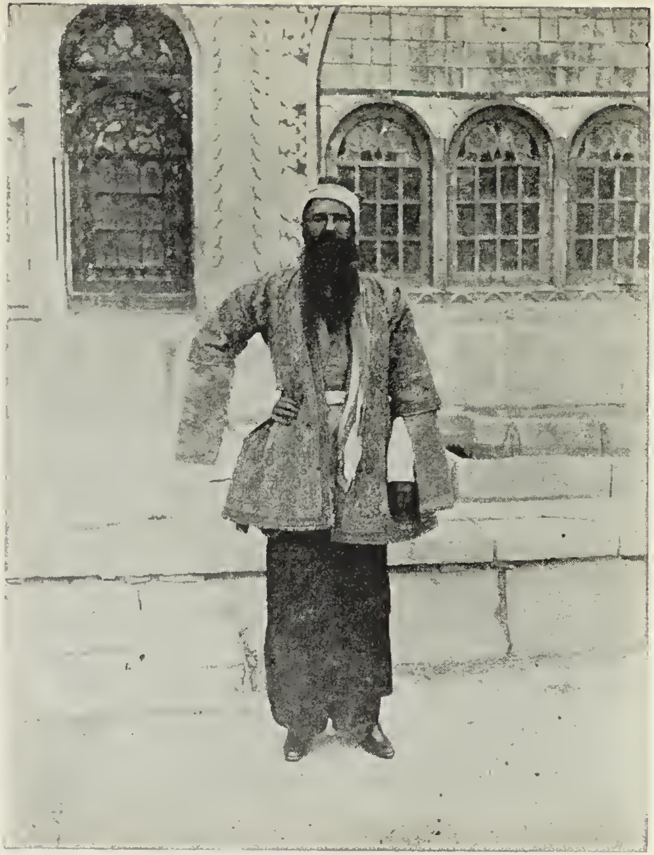
CHAPTER X

THE ROAD OF THE GREAT CONQUERORS

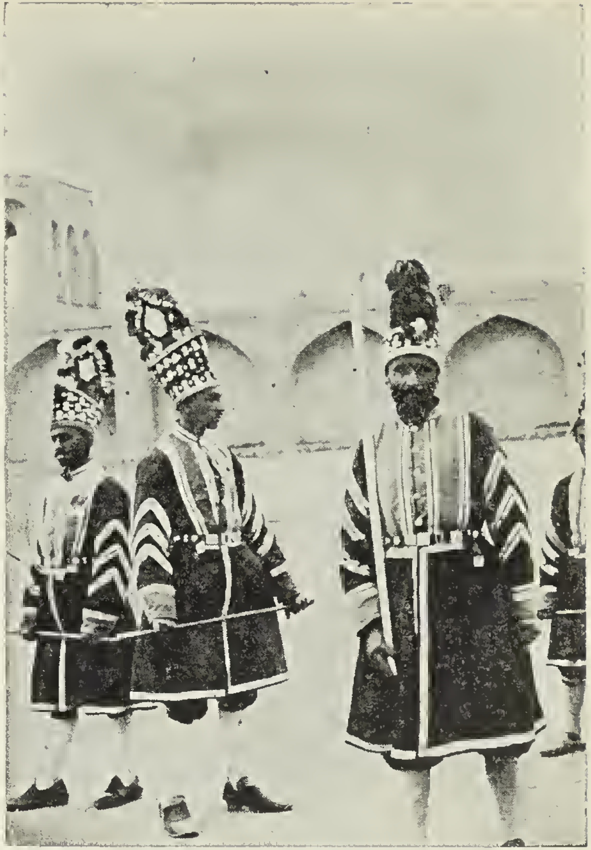
IT had been our intention, upon leaving Tehran, to strike northward to Enzeli, on the Caspian, and pick up a coasting-vessel which would land us at Baku, whence the Bolshevists maintain a railway service of sorts across the Caucasus to the Black Sea port of Batoum, where it would be an easy matter to get passage for Constantinople. One of the reasons why we decided on this route was because we wished to travel from Baku to Batoum on the famous "Speculators' Special," the weekly train de luxe which is patronized by the oil-barons and profiteers despite the fact that on about one trip out of four it is held up in the Georgian passes and the passengers relieved of everything they possess, including their boots. They call it the "Speculators' Special," because it is patronized in the main by the wealthy oil operators and it is always a speculation as to whether they will reach their destination unharmed. With us, however, it was not so much of a speculation as it might appear, for we had taken the precaution of insuring our luggage before leaving Constantinople. Further spice was lent to the proposed journey by the warnings which we had received from friends in Tehran that if we persisted in taking it we would almost certainly contract typhus, which was then reported to be raging throughout the Caucasus. The typhus germ, it seems, is conveyed through the bite of a louse, and with this little insect the dilapidated carriages of the Transcaucasian Railway swarm. To circumvent it you wear a one-piece garment of linen, fastened with elastic at wrist and ankle, and cover your head with a sort of bathing-cap. It struck us that the combination of Bolshevists, brigands, and typhus-carrying lice should make for a very interesting journey, and we looked forward to it with keen anticipation.

Now, the Caucasus, which has been a recognized short cut between central Asia and southeastern Europe since time began, is, under Bolshevist rule, closed to all foreigners. Though the three republics—Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia—into which it is divided are in theory independent, they are actually under the thumb of the Soviet Government at Moscow, to whose diplomatic representatives abroad those foreigners desiring to pass through the Caucasus must make application.

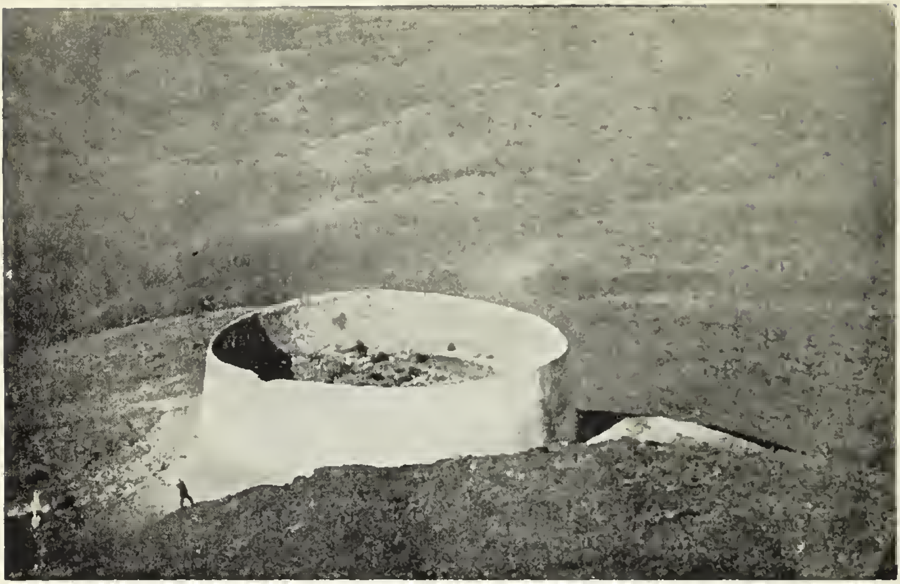
In our negotiations with those who in Tehran represented the Russian Socialist Federal Soviet Republic, to give it its official name, we were not assisted by our own legation. This was not due to any discourtesy or lack of interest on the part of the American minister, Dr. Kornfeld, but to the fact that the Department of State at Washington has steadfastly refused to have any relations with the assassins who at present control the Government of Russia. So, in seeking to obtain permission to cross the Caucasus, we had to rely upon the influence and good will of the Persian and European officials with whom we had become acquainted during our stay in Tehran. Among these were some of the most influential personages in the country: his Imperial Highness the Valiahd, who was acting as regent during the absence in Europe of his brother the shah; the Khavam-es-Saltaneh, who had just accepted the post of premier; the Sardar Sipah, the virtual dictator of Persia; Sir Percy Loraine, the British minister to Persia; Herr Sohmers, the German *chargé d'affaires*—these had all sent personal requests to the Russian legation, asking that the permission we desired be granted us. It struck me that, with a crown prince, two cabinet ministers, and the representatives of two great European nations working for us, there was n't much



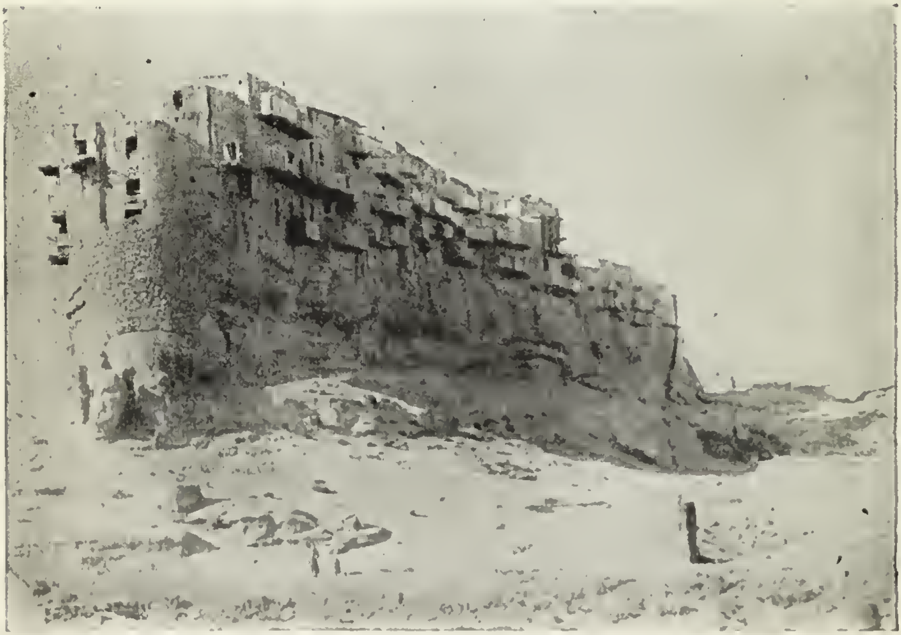
This imposing gentleman, whose beard has been dyed with henna to the color of a tropic sunset, is the chieftain of one of the most redoubtable tribes of Luristan, on the borders of 'Iraq.



The imperial *ferrashes*. These scarlet-coated footmen run before the carriage of the shah, clearing the road with their wands and maces.



A Parsee "Tower of Silence" near Rhey, a few miles from Tehran. In the interior the bodies of the dead are exposed on a grating for the birds and the elements to destroy.



Yesd-i-Khast, in central Persia, is one of the most extraordinary towns in the world. It is a dove-cote-like collection of mud houses clinging precariously to the top of an immense rock which rises like a great island from a shallow ravine.

likelihood of our application's being turned down. I had considerable faith, also, in a letter of introduction to one of the Bolshevist commissars in the Caucasus, given me by a well known parlor socialist in New York, in which I was referred to as "Comrade." But before presenting this credential I took the precaution of making a few inquiries, and it was well that I did, for I was told that the gentleman to whom it was addressed had been shot by the Bolos (as the British have nicknamed the Bolsheviks) a few weeks before for treason.

I decided that I would get quicker action by delivering Sir Percy Loraine's letter to the Soviet *chargé* in person, and so I hired a car and drove out to the Russian summer legation at Zergendé, a lovely place of sweeping lawns and splendid trees and blazing gardens on the slopes of the Shimrân. The entrance to the legation grounds was guarded by a sentry in the uniform of the Red army—a blouse of brownish linen slashed across with scarlet, and the so-called "Trotzky helmet," which looks like the old German *Pickelhaube* loosely covered with yellow leather and is surely one of the most curious military head-dresses ever devised. On the sleeve of his blouse and on the front of the helmet was a great red star, the insignia of the Red armies, on which were embroidered the arms of Soviet Russia. At first glance I mistook them, naturally enough, for a dagger and a butcher's ax, but they proved, upon closer inspection, to be a sickle and a hammer—the emblems of industry and not of murder, as I had supposed. Girding his waist were three tiers of cartridge-belts, into which were thrust, ready for instant action, two of the largest automatics I have ever seen. He was ready for trouble, and, judging from his unfriendly demeanor, he was quite willing to go more than half-way to meet it.

But the attaché who received me at the door of the legation made the sentry seem colorless and tame. He was too good to be true. In fact, it took me some time to realize that he was not arrayed for a fancy-dress party. He was quite young, with a pale, almost effeminate face and tapering woman's fingers. His dark hair was bobbed just below the ears, like a girl's, and from his left ear depended a large gold bangle. He wore a sort of shirt-waist of calico, white with black polka-dots, open at the neck so as to expose his chest and rolling back in a sort of Byronic collar; his legs were incased in riding-breeches and leggings. This extraordinary ensemble was completed by a large white helmet, much the worse for dirt; and he carried at his waist, of course, the inevitable Browning. It is only doing him justice to add that he was not a bred-in-the-bone Red, but a Cossack poet who had fled to Tehran upon the outbreak of the revolution and had accepted employment in the Russian legation in order to avert starvation.

Upon explaining my mission I was shown into a reception-room, Sir Percy Loraine's letter was taken from me, and my friend with the ear-ring disappeared, leaving me to my own devices. The entire wall at one end of the room was covered by a large map of Soviet Russia—a great blood-red blotch spreading across the hemisphere from the Arctic to the Afghan border. On a mantel at the opposite end of the apartment stood cheap plaster busts of Lenin and Trotzky. As I was examining the map the door was suddenly flung open by a soldier to admit two secretaries whom I had not seen before. One was a sullen, taciturn fellow, with suspicion and latent hostility showing in his cold gray eyes. The other was younger and spoke fluent English, which, he explained, he had learned during a prolonged residence in America—at Schenectady, if I remember rightly.

"I have handed Sir Percy Loraine's letter to the *chargé d'affaires,*" the younger one translated for the elder. "He wishes me to say that he will be glad to do anything he can for Sir Percy and his friends, but that it is impossible for this legation to visé your passports without first obtaining permission from the authorities at Tiflis.''

''And how long will that take?'' I inquired.

''We will wire Tiflis to-day,'' the secretary assured me. ''Moreover, in order to be sure of the message getting through, we will send two telegrams—one by Eastern Telegraph and one by our own radio. To-day is Monday, is it not? Well, we certainly should have a reply by Thursday.''

So I thanked them, and, repassing the scowling Cerberus at the gate, departed in quite a hopeful frame of mind.

But that same evening Herr Sohmers, the affable and obliging *chargé d'affaires* of the German legation, called at the American mission, where we were staying.

''I have some news for you,'' he began; but, catching my look of expectancy, he hastened to add; ''though I am sorry to say that it is not favorable. This afternoon one of the Russian secretaries dropped in on me for tea.''

'' 'Are you going to let Major Powell and his friends go out through the Caucasus?' I asked him casually as he was leaving.''

'' 'No chance of it,' he answered. 'When Major Powell called at the legation this morning we told him that we would telegraph to Tiflis for permission, but, of course, we had no intention of doing anything of the kind. On Thursday we shall send him word that Tiflis has refused to give its consent. That will avoid the necessity of troubling Tiflis or giving offense to Sir Percy Loraine. The truth of the matter is that we don't want any inquisitive Americans prying into our affairs in the Caucasus.' "

And, sure enough, on Thursday evening a messenger from the British legation brought me the following communication:

Tehran, 14th June, 1922.

The Chargé d'Affaires of the Russian Socialist Federal Soviet Republic presents his compliments to H. M. Plenipotentiary Minister and wishes to acknowledge receipt of his communication of the 11th instant. Always being desirous of meeting the recommendations of H. M. Plenipotentiary Minister, the Chargé d'Affaires of the Russian Socialist Federal Soviet Republic nevertheless has much regret in stating that in the case of

Major E. Alexander Powell
Mr. DeW. V. Hutchings
Mr. H. S. Ladew
& Mr. W. Sherin

seeking permission to cross Caucasus by railway on their way to Constantinople and thence to the United States of America—the authorities of the Trans-Caucasian Republics, upon having been requested, declined to grant permission to the four gentlemen in question.

But though, as Sir Percy put it, the Bolos had "slammed the door in our faces and shot the bolt," three routes still remained open to us. We could recross Arabia by the way we had come, but a long and arduous desert journey by caravan in the appalling heat of summer did not appeal to us. Or we could go by rail from Baghdad to Basra, on the Shat-el-Arab, whence there are weekly sailings for Bombay, where we could make connections with the P. & O. boats for Europe; but this meant the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean in the hottest month of the year and at the height of the monsoon season. Or, provided seats were available, we could fly from the Tigris to the Nile by one of the airplanes which twice monthly carry the mails from Baghdad to Cairo. The journey occupies about seven and a half hours, including a brief stop for petrol at Amman, in Transjordania; and the charge per passenger is one hundred and fifty pounds, or about seven hundred and fifty dollars. The idea of flying across Arabia on a modern Magic Carpet appealed to us as being both picturesque and appropriate, and so we wired a request to Sir Percy Cox, the British high commissioner in Mesopotamia, only to be informed that the planes were booked solidly for several months ahead. While we were debating the matter still another short cut to Syria and the shores of the Mediterranean suggested itself—up the valley of the Euphrates. This involved the retracing of our steps as far as Baghdad, following the

Tigris northward to Mosul and Nineveh, and thence in a northwesterly direction across the Mesopotamian wastes to the Euphrates, which we could follow almost to Aleppo, where there is railway connection with the ports on the coast of Syria. Though since the war, owing to the unsafe condition of the country, this route had not been attempted by Europeans—save, perhaps, one or two French or British officers engaged on political missions to the Bedouins or reconnoitering expeditions—we decided to take it because it promised to be the quickest and the most interesting. That it was the quickest is proved by the fact that I traveled from Tehran to Sandy Hook in just thirty days, which constitutes, I believe, a world's record. And it proved so interesting, not to say exciting, that I shall always be grateful to the Bolos for having forced us to take it.

In traversing the land of Harun-al-Rashid—for that picturesque ruler was born within a few miles of Tehran and is buried in Meshed—it would have been far more appropriate, we realized, to travel by caravan, but we had crossed Arabia by camel only a few weeks before and we had no desire for another journey on the ships of the desert. So we compromised on a dilapidated Benz, which had already seen its best days when Bismarck was dismissed by the Kaiser, and for our luggage an elderly member of the well known Ford family of Detroit. The Benz was skippered by a Russian refugee (*not* the charming colonel of engineers who had driven us on the up-journey) who, judging from his looks, had left his country between two days and for his country's good; the pilot of the Ford was some brand of native Christian—an Assyrian, I think. After the cars had been loaded with our luggage, food, water, spare tires, and tins of petrol, they looked like hucksters' wagons, the only touch needed to complete the picture being for our disreputable drivers to sing out at every house we passed: "Any old bottles for sale? Old rubber? Old iron?"

We had completed our loading and had managed to wedge ourselves into the already over-crowded cars, and the servants had thrown open the gates of the mission compound, when I gave vent to a resounding sneeze. It was quite an ordinary sneeze, such as might happen to any one, but our Muscovite driver turned in his seat and regarded me suspiciously, while the Assyrian, who had been attempting to start the Ford, dropped his crank and stood waiting.

"Sneeze again!" called our hostess, Mrs. Boyce, who had come out to see us off. "Sneeze quickly or it will be too late."

"But what—why——?" I stammered.

"Sneeze again!" she commanded. "Do as I tell you."

So, wishing to help along the joke, whatever it was, I managed, with some effort, to produce a second sneeze. It was not much a success, as sneezes go, but it produced an immediate effect, for the Russian's look of suspicion changed to one of relief and the Assyrian resumed his cranking.

Then my hostess explained. The natives of that part of the world are extremely superstitious, one of their most deep-seated beliefs being that to set out on a journey after a person has sneezed *once* is to invite disaster. The regulation double-barreled sneeze portends no ill luck, it seems, but a one-gun salute is regarded as a direct affront to the Evil One. Mrs. Boyce told me that once, when she and her husband were traveling in the mountains, she had sneezed once, whereupon their muleteers stopped in their tracks and refused to go farther until she sneezed again. And there is a well known instance of Shah Muzaffer-ed-Din's having postponed a trip to Europe because of this unlucky omen.

The way to the south leads through Kazvin and Hamadan and Kermanshah and so down the ladders of Persia to the Mesopotamian plain. And every mile of it is over classic ground, for in the great and far-off years the tides of the world's most significant history passed up and down this age-old highway between Persia and Babylon. It might fittingly be called the Road of the Conquerors, for its dust has been stirred by the chargers of Cyrus, Cambyses, Darius, Xerxes, Alexander of Macedon; it has trembled to the tramp of their victorious legions; and it is still haunted by the ghosts of the great captains. As we tore southward I could close my eyes and see them—high-nosed, stern-faced, sun-bronzed men, in gilded war-chariots or astride of splendid horses, their brazen helmets rising above the rivers of slanting spears.

Because of our unpleasant recollections of the inn at Kazvin, we determined to make the journey from Tehran to Hamadan in a single stage. We had arranged to start early (that is to say, about seven) in order to manage the trip comfortably, but there were the usual delays, which, however, we had learned to expect and accept, for by now we were becoming somewhat Persianized. So that it was nearly two hours past the hour that we had set for our departure when we passed beneath the westernmost of the twelve gates of Tehran and found ourselves on the road again.

When Childs Frick, who is an enthusiastic naturalist, heard that Ladew was going to Persia, he begged that he obtain for him a specimen of the Persian wild ass, which, I understand, is one of the rarest of living quadrupeds. Though our knowledge of the habits of wild asses was confined to Omar's familiar lines

> And Bahram, that great hunter, the wild ass
> Stamps o'er his head, but cannot break his sleep,

nevertheless, whenever we discerned a cloud of dust rising from the dreary plain, we would seize the field-glasses and examine it eagerly, only to meet with disappointment, for it usually resolved itself into one of those discouraged-looking domesticated asses, which, because of their ubiquity and general usefulness, might fittingly be called Persian flivvers.

Slowly the long, hot day dragged by, for now that we were retracing our steps, there was no longer the same novelty in the scenes along the road, and the eager anticipation which had made the up-journey pass so swiftly had disappeared. We lunched beside the road, in the grateful shade afforded by a grove of gnarled old trees, cooling our feet in a little brooklet as we ate; and what was left from the lunch we ate at nightfall, a hundred miles farther on, this time stamping our feet to get them warm, for with darkness comes a penetrating cold on the Persian uplands. Then on again, on again, the road an endless ribbon of silver now. The illuminated hands of my wrist-watch pointed to twenty minutes after two, and a hint of dawn was in the eastern sky, when, our headlights boring twin holes in the darkness, we slipped down the flanks of the Karaghan, flashed past the guardhouse at the city gate before the sleepy sentry could grasp his rifle, turned sharply into a narrow street which ran between high walls of sunbaked mud, rumbled over a flimsy bridge, and came to a halt before the gate of the mission compound. Above the sleeping city a mighty wall of rock, gray-white beneath the moon, rose against the purple velvet sky. I gazed upon it fascinated, for I knew it for the outer rampart of Kurdistan, that land of mystery and massacre.

The Assyrian who piloted our baggage-car was so eager to get on to Kermanshah that he piqued my curiosity, for eagerness to get anywhere in a hurry, or to do anything which involves effort, is not a characteristic of the peoples who inhabit the plateau of Iran. I dismissed the matter with the assumption that a pair of dark eyes and red lips were awaiting him, but later in the day. in a burst of confidence, he explained that a man whom he knew was to be hanged within the next day or so in Kermanshah, and that, if the sah'b and his friends would graciously consent to start a little earlier than usual the following morning, we would probably arrive in time to witness the hanging.

When we arrived in Kermanshah, what with the annoyances incident to obtaining spare tires and petrol, and other troubles, the matter of the impending execution entirely slipped my mind, but I was abruptly reminded of it when, in searching for the telegraph office, I had occasion to cross the *maidan*. The *maidan* of Kermanshah, as I think I have mentioned elsewhere in these pages, is, like those of other Persian cities, a great sun-baked yellow square, not unlike a New England common. From the center of it rose, I noted, a peculiar structure, consisting of two uprights, perhaps twenty feet in height, connected at the top by a cross-bar, the whole painted a bright vermilion. Dangling from the cross-bar were two ropes, so that the affair resembled a children's swing, such as one sees on public playgrounds at home. And it was a swing, though not for the purpose that I had imagined, for, upon closer inspection, I noticed that each of the ropes had a noose at the end. Then I realized, with a little shiver, that I was standing beneath the city gallows. Directly below it was a tank, or pool, in which the women of the town were doing their washing, and in whose waters the condemned, if they were so minded, could see reflected their own dying struggles. The manager of the telegraph bureau, a most affable young Persian, informed me that an execution was to take place at noon, and suggested that, if I cared to wait, he would have tea served to me upon his balcony, which overlooked the *maidan* and from which, he assured me, I could obtain an excellent view of the proceedings. But I declined with thanks. I have seen many men die, in many fashions, and I had no desire to add to my store of unpleasant recollections.

As a matter of fact, executions are so common in Kermanshah as scarcely to provoke comment. A frontier town, it stands amid the foot-hills of the Zagros range, which not only forms the border-land between Persia and Mesopotamia but is also the border-land between two of the most warlike and troublesome tribes in all this region—the Kurds and the Lurs. From time beyond reckoning it has been the custom of these fierce highland clansmen to support themselves by swooping down upon the caravans as they wend their toilsome way through the rocky defiles, and to loot them or collect from them tolls in the form of money, merchandise, or camels. These practices were scarcely calculated to encourage trade, however, and frequent repetitions of them had resulted in the British authorities in Mesopotamia sending such peremptory messages to the Persian Government that an expedition had been despatched against the bandits. After some weeks of ineffectual skirmishing in the hills, and the expenditure of much ammunition, the expedition had returned to Kermanshah in triumph, bringing with it a score of prisoners. Now it was common gossip in the bazaars that these prisoners were not bandits at all, but inoffensive goatherds and villagers, whom the commander of the expedition had brought back in order to placate his superiors. Be that as it may, they had been tried and convicted, the court ordering that, instead of being launched into eternity *en masse,* they should be hanged in twos, a pair each week, as long as they lasted. The idea of this was to prolong the object-lesson, but it had the additional advantage, from the popular standpoint, of providing the populace with entertainment over a period of two months or more.

This sounds, perhaps, as though the Persians were a cruel people, which they are not; though callous to suffering, whether of man or beast, they certainly are. But it must be kept in mind that

Persia is a frontier country, and on the frontier methods of repression that to the city-dweller appear unnecessarily harsh have always prevailed. The rough-and-ready justice that brought law and order to the mining-camps and cow-towns of the American West would horrify the country if employed to-day, yet they were needed none the less. Let me add, before leaving a somewhat grisly subject, that the barbarous methods of punishment so long in vogue in Persia, such as burying criminals alive, or rolling them up in plaster columns, or blowing them from the mouths of guns, have virtually disappeared. The cutting off of a highwayman's hand is still resorted to in some of the remoter provinces, I was told; and cases of hamstringing, which means cutting the tendons at the back of the knee, are not entirely unknown; but, generally speaking, the hangman's noose, the prison cell, and, for minor offenses, the bastinado, have replaced the horrors of earlier times.

The single daily train which runs between Tiaruq and Baghdad leaves the rail-head about noon, so, in order to be certain of catching it, we had to leave Kermanshah at two o'clock in the morning. This meant that we would have to negotiate the earlier stages of the dangerous

Paitok Pass in semi-darkness. The Muscovite who was driving our Benz had the most original method of descending a mountain road that I have ever seen. Instead of putting his clutch into second gear, he would shut off his power entirely and then go charging downward at terrific speed, the big car lurching from side to side of the precipice-bordered road like a runaway locomotive. The ordinary curves he took on two wheels, presumably to save rubber, but when we were within a few yards of one of the hair-pin turns with which the pass abounds, with nothing ahead but emptiness, he would suddenly jam on foot and emergency brakes simultaneously, thus locking his rear wheels and causing the stern of the car to skid around the corner. And sometimes, at the narrower places, where the outside of the road ended in "a drop into nothing below you as far as a beggar could spit," he would give us an extra thrill by gripping the steering-wheel with his knees so that he would have both hands free to light a cigarette. I do not think that I am a particularly nervous person, but I am frank to say that I heaved a sigh of relief when we reached the bottom. There were several moments when I wondered if I was going to see the Statue of Liberty again.

But, eight hours after leaving the mission compound in Kermanshah, we drew up safely before the custom-house at Kasr-i-Shirin. A few rods more and Persia was but a memory. At our backs rose the purple mountains of Kurdistan; before us, far as the eye could see, stretched a tawny waste above which heat-waves danced and flickered. Threading an archipelago of low brown hills, we dropped down into a *nullah,* climbed the other side, and found ourselves confronted by a barrier of barbed wire. Beyond it stood three or four mud hovels, a box-car without wheels, and a small cluster of khaki tents over which flew the flag of 'Iraq. And there, its twin lines of steel stretching to the horizon's rim, was the railway.

There is something peculiarly comforting and reassuring in the sight of a railway upon emerging from a land which has never echoed to the hoot of a locomotive. For a railway, no matter how poor a thing it may be, nearly always leads to newspapers and electric lights and ice-plants and the other things that stand for civilization. We knew that this railway, for example, would bear us to Baghdad, where we could make connections with another line to Basra; and from Basra there are weekly sailings for Bombay, which, as every one knows, is only a step by P. & O. to Rome and Paris and London. We had n't the slightest intention of going home by any such prosaic route as that, of course, but it was pleasant to know that we *could* go home that way if we chose. Looking down that vista of steel we could see, beyond the sun-swept orange plain, the leafy boulevards beside the Seine, the tables at Armenonville gleaming with glass and silver, the lights of the taxicabs on the pavements of Piccadilly.

When we arrived in Baghdad the hot season was at its height, and existence there was like living in a perpetual Turkish bath. Our boots turned green with mildew overnight, and our garments were soaked with perspiration almost before we could get them on. So we wasted no time in making inquiries about the route we proposed to take and the political conditions prevailing in the regions we would traverse and in completing the preparations for our departure. Though we could find no one who had actually made the journey across the northern desert to Aleppo, the intelligence officers at G. H. Q. assured us that we would be tolerably safe from molestation within the British zone, and the French consul told us that, according to his latest advices, the Arabs were comparatively quiet in French territory. But no one was very sanguine about our getting through. In motoring parlance, the road was "passable but unsafe."

Thus it came about that one sweltering summer evening found us boarding a ramshackle train at the Baghdad station of that historic line, the Berlin-Baghdad Railway. Contrary to the popular impression, this famous highway of steel, built by the kaiser as a threat to British domination in the Middle East, still lacks several hundred miles of completion. The only portions of the line at present in operation are the northern section, which, starting from Scutari, on the southern shore of the Bosphorus, winds across Asia Minor, pierces by a remarkable series of tunnels the ranges of the Taurus, and ends, for the time being, at Muslimiyeh, a few miles north of Aleppo, where it connects with the Syrian system;[1] and the southern section, which, starting from Basra, on the Shat-el-Arab, not far from the head of the Persian Gulf, follows the west bank of the Euphrates as far as Kerbela, where it crosses the river to join the Tigris at Baghdad, thence following the latter stream through Opis, Samarra, and Tekrit, to the present end-of-steel at Schergat. Though on the section between Musilimiyeh and Schergat most of the grading has been completed and rails have been laid for considerable distances, there is no certainty when the line will be completed and in operation, for the very good reason that this section of it runs through disputed territory, which, though to-day under the control of the French and British, may to-morrow be controlled by the Arabs and Turks. Though England dreamed of obtaining control of this great system, from the Bosphorus to the Gulf, as one of the prizes of the war, nothing is more certain than that it will never become an "all red" route. The French and the Turks will see to that. The uncertainty of its present status and future ownership explains, perhaps, why the British have been so slow to complete that portion of it which runs through their mandated territory in Mesopotamia. The section between Baghdad and Samarra was completed by the Germans during the war, and since then the British have pushed the rail-head northward as far as Schergat, eighty-six miles south of Mosul, where we had arranged for cars to meet us.

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[1] Now that the northern section of the Baghdad Railway is in operation, one can travel by train, via the Syrian and Palestine systems, from Constantinople to Cairo and beyond.

As our train slid slowly out of the Baghdad station I felt that one of the dreams of my boyhood was about to be realized. The land through which we were journeying was hoary with antiquity when the rest of the world was in its swaddling-clothes; it was the stage on which were played some of the most thrilling and significant dramas in the early history of mankind, and it still reeks with romance and adventure. To our right, between the gently swaying date-palms, I could glimpse the Tigris shining brightly in the moonlight; and, quite close at hand, the cone-shaped tomb of Zobeide, the beloved of Harun-al-Rashid, loomed against the stars. Over there, a few score miles to the westward, flowed the Euphrates, that biblical river which formed the boundary between Assyria and the land of the Hittites. Within a few hours we would pass the great mounds of Tel Manjur, beneath which lie hidden the remains of the once-powerful Babylonian city of Opis, with its memories of Xenophon and Alexander. We would stand upon the ruins of Nineveh; we would see the sites of Nimrod's feats and Nebuchadnezzar's feasts; we would traverse the regions where history began.

"Do you realize," I said to my companions, as we sat in the Turkish-bath atmosphere of our compartment, "that we are traveling through the cradle of the human race?"

"It may be a cradle," Hutchings remarked dryly, as he mopped away a rivulet of perspiration that was trickling down his face, "but to me it appears more like an incubator."

CHAPTER XI

IN THE HANDS OF THE BEDOUINS

OWENS, the efficient and obliging young Southerner who is the American Consul in Baghdad, had telegraphed to a Syrian in Mosul with whom he was acquainted to engage cars and drivers for our journey across the Mesopotamian desert and to make the necessary arrangements, so that when we arrived in that city we found the vehicles awaiting us. One of them, which we used for the luggage, had had its nativity in the Ford factory in Detroit; the other was a local creation mounted on a Talbot chassis which was a veteran of the late war—and looked it. I doubt if any one ever undertook so arduous a journey in such a ramshackle conveyance. It was a motorized counterpart of "The Toonerville Trolley That Meets All the Trains." The body, which had three seats running crosswise like a sight-seeing bus, had evidently been fabricated by a native carpenter from packing-cases, soap-boxes, and any other material that came to hand, for under the thin coating of paint I could faintly discern the familiar legend, "Ivory Soap, 99 44/100% pure." The fenders were made of Standard Oil tins, hammered flat and soldered together. The top, which had belonged originally to a much smaller car and had been pieced out with sailcloth, was supported by short lengths of pine scantling, which, being unbraced, permitted it to shake and wiggle like a shimmy-dancer. Every now and then one of the supports would break, whereupon the driver would hold the loose end in one hand, while driving the car with the other, until an opportunity offered to nail them together. That the car did not disintegrate in the desert long before we reached our destination was due to the lavish use of wire nails and to that same beneficent Providence which looks after drunkards and children.

Mosul—from which, by the way, muslin takes its name—is the meeting-point of the great caravan routes from Aleppo, Diarbekr, Bitlis, Tabriz, Kermanshah, and Baghdad, so that in its bazaars, or lounging before its coffee-houses, one may see all the characteristic types of Hither Asia: Syrians in skirts and scarlet fezzes; piratical-looking Kurds with miniature arsenals in their bulging girdles; Armenians with memories of oppression and massacre showing in their cringing manner and furtive eyes; swaggering Circassians

The Leaning Minaret of Mosul. If it were in Europe it would be visited by thousands of tourists.

A street in Mosul. The dwellings of the poor are miserable hovels of mud, but those of the well-to-do have pretentious façades in the Moorish style and sculptured portals of the so-called Mosul marble, which is a kind of colored stucco.

Across the Tigris from Mosul, rising gently from the dusty plain, a huge yellow mound, its slopes covered with enormous building blocks, covers all that remains of Nineveh.

This wall marks the site of the vast palace of Sennacherib, the conqueror and destroyer of Babylon. On this lonely spot once stood a city which was old when Tarquinius ruled in Rome, which was hoary with antiquity when England was still peopled by painted savages.

in tight-waisted coats with rows of cartridge-cases across the breast and enormous, shaggy caps of white sheepskin; sallow-faced Persians; riverine Arabs in flowing *abiyehs* and red-and-white *keffiehs;* hawk-nosed, fierce-eyed Bedouins with rifles slung across their backs and their braided hair hanging down in front of their shoulders, schoolgirl fashion. The dwellings of the poor are miserable hovels built of mud, but those of the well-to-do have pretentious façades in the Moorish style and sculptured portals of the so-called Mosul marble, which is really a kind of colored stucco, giving them an effect of grandeur which is wholly meretricious and undeserved. Though the houses turn a blank wall to the street, as though turning their backs in disgust on the filth outside, the inner courts, which resemble the patios of Spanish dwellings, are frequently very picturesque. The court is surrounded by a colonnade, the columns, which are cut from soft gypsum, extending to the roof. The lower story has the kitchens on one side, the servants' quarters on another, while on the others opens the entrance to the *serdah,* the deep, dim basement whither the family retires in hot weather. The ordinary living-rooms open upon an upper gallery, while the roof above affords a comfortable sleeping-place during the hot season, when the upper rooms are scorching with the heat stored up during the day in the porous walls. In Moslem houses, on the side of the court that is toward Mecca, there is often a lofty niche, elaborately carved and painted. It serves the same purpose as the *mihrab* in a mosque, and toward it the members of the family turn their faces at the hours of prayer.

The only building of importance is the Great Mosque, which can be found by a stranger only with the aid of a guide, so devious are the ways that lead to it, though it can be seen from almost any quarter of the town. In the center of its broad, flagged court, which is bordered on one side by a graceful Saracenic colonnade, is an ancient fountain, which, in its design and carvings, is the best thing, architecturally, in the city. Close by is the remarkable leaning minaret, forming a landmark which can be seen by approaching travelers long before the low-roofed city comes in view. I was unable to obtain the measurements of the minaret, but it is certainly considerably more than two hundred feet in height and, to an untrained eye, appears to be as much out of the perpendicular as the Leaning Tower of Pisa. If it were in Europe, instead of an inaccessible city of Inner Asia, it would be visited by thousands of tourists, and picture post-cards of it would be seen everywhere.

Mosul itself possesses little of historic interest, but, if you cross the ancient stone bridge which spans the muddy Tigris, along whose low shores thousands of women are doing their family washing, you will see, about a mile from the river, rising gently from the dusty plain, two huge yellow mounds, their slopes covered with what appears, from a distance, to be enormous building-blocks. As you approach the nearer mound, however, these resolve themselves into portions of a tremendous wall, against the base of which huddle the cubical mud dwellings of an Arab village. The traveler who can look upon that mound without experiencing a thrill has no imagination in his soul, for it is all that remains of one of the most splendid cities of antiquity, the capital of the second of the world's great empires—Nineveh. Founded, according to tradition, by Nimrod, that "mighty hunter before the Lord," it was for upward of three hundred years the capital of the Assyrian Empire. The walls which are still standing—and to which were nailed on more than one occasion newly flayed skins, ripped from the living bodies of Median and Babylonian kings—mark the site of the vast palace of Sennacherib, the conqueror and destroyer of Babylon, who

. . . came down like the wolf on the fold,
And his cohorts were gleaming in purple and gold;

And the sheen of their spears was like stars on the sea,
When the blue wave rolls nightly on deep Galilee.

The palace originally stood on the banks of the Tigris, which on that side formed a wide and impassable moat. But the river which had protected the city for centuries was destined, as ancient prophecy had predicted, to cause its downfall. In 608 B.C., when King Sardanapalus was defending the last vestige of Assyrian power against the growing empires of Media and Babylonia, and when the allied armies were at the gates of his capital, a great flood, caused by the melting snows, poured down from the mountains to the north.[1] So tremendous was the force of the swollen river that it undermined the bank on which the city stood, making great breaches in the palace walls. The Assyrian monarch, recognizing that his position had become hopeless, and well knowing that he could expect no mercy from the armies of the countries whose cities he had destroyed and whose kings he had put to death by torture, ordered the great palace to be fired, perishing with his wives and concubines and children in one terrible holocaust.

As I stood in the fierce sunshine, staring up at the mighty ruin looming against the hot blue sky, there was brought home to me, as never before, a

[1] See "The Gate of Asia," by William Warfield.

realization of the mutability of mundane things. For on this lonely spot had once stood a city which was old when Tarquinius ruled in Rome, which was hoary with antiquity when England was still peopled with painted savages; a city whose very name was a synonym for pride and luxury and power:

> Far-call'd our navies melt away—
> On dune and headland sinks the fire—
> Lo, all our pomp of yesterday
> Is one with Nineveh and Tyre!

Close by the mound that once was Nineveh is another known to the Arabs as Nebi-Yunus, atop of which is the alleged tomb of the Prophet Jonah. If you are familiar with the Scriptures you will remember that Jonah, after passing three days and three nights in the belly of the whale, was thrown up on the dry land and forthwith made his way to Nineveh to admonish that city for its wickedness and to predict its downfall. How the followers of Mohammed came to adopt this perfectly good Hebrew as one of their own prophets is not clear, but the fact remains that his tomb has been a Moslem shrine for upward of a thousand years. The sarcophagus itself, covered with priceless Persian shawls, the offerings of pilgrims, stands in the center of a square, vaulted chamber, the floor of which is considerably below the level of the ground, thereby giving the interior, which is lined with porcelain tiles of the "lost" shade of Persian blue, a most refreshing coolness after the sun-glare outside. Depending from the dome by a silver chain, so that they swing directly over the resting-place of the intrepid Jewish seafarer, are several "swords" of the swordfish. When I asked the aged *mullah* who was in charge of the shrine what they were, he explained, in a tone which betrayed pity for my ignorance, that they were the teeth of the whale that swallowed Jonah!

"I can stand for the story of the whale," Hutchings remarked dryly, as we emerged into the stifling heat again, "but hanged if I can stand for the swordfish."

By glancing at the map of western Asia you will see that Mesopotamia is to all intents and purposes an island—whence its Arabic name of el-Jezireh—being almost completely circumscribed by the Tigris and the Euphrates. These great rivers, which, diverging from the Shatt-el-Arab, form the boundaries of Babylonia, closely approach each other in the latitude of Baghdad and again widen out to inclose the great plain of Mesopotamia, "the Land between the Rivers," a pear-shaped region the size of California, their head-waters all but reuniting near Diarbekr, in the hills of Kurdistan.

I suppose that all of us draw mental pictures of places and regions which we have constantly heard about, and that most of us have noticed how invariably the real place is not only totally different from the mental picture but almost aggressively so. That was the way it was with Mesopotamia. When I was a child, pictures of Mesopotamia would present themselves very vividly to my mind as a vast desert of yellow sand, broken by occasional oases. In reality, all the region that lies between the rapid, muddy Tigris and the clear, sparkling stream of her sister, the Euphrates, deserves the name of desert only because of the absence of irrigation and cultivation. As a matter of fact, the soil is of the richest loam, transformable by irrigation into a veritable garden of the Lord. At high water, during the months of February and March, the tract between the two rivers is dotted with pools and shallow lakes, the home of flocks of wild fowl. When the water subsides the earth becomes covered, as though by magic, with a carpet of grass and flowers, which, however, dry up in May beneath the pitiless sun, and again the term desert becomes applicable. As the summer advances with its fierce heat the soil becomes dry as chalk, criss-crossed by a network of great cracks and fissures, the only sign of vegetation being discouraged-looking bushes and tufts of tinder-like grass.[1]

I have been asked many times as to the agricultural possibilities of this region. It has great agricultural possibilities, make no mistake about that, but they can only be developed by irrigation, which means, of course, an enormous expenditure of money. The soil is, I should say, fully as fertile as that of New Mexico and Arizona, and, just as those States find an ample water-supply in the Gila and the Colorado, so Mesopotamia would find one in the Tigris and the Euphrates. Experiments have shown that wheat does well in Mesopotamia, which is, indeed, its original habitat; so does long-staple cotton. More than two hundred varieties of dates are native to the country, and its melons and cucumbers (the natives eat the latter as we eat apples) are unsurpassed anywhere in the world. Before leaving Mosul we drove out to see an enterprise known as Mosul Farms, Ltd., where, on some thousands of acres beside the Tigris, a number of Englishmen, several of whom had lived in California, were demonstrating what could be accomplished in this ancient soil with the aid of water, modern agricultural implements, and scientific methods. The results were astonishing, for, though the enterprise had only been going a year or two, it already compared quite favorably with the large and successful farms of our Middle West. A Kurdish chieftain, educated in England, who owns a twenty-thousand-acre ranch a few miles outside of Baghdad, has employed American methods in the development of his property with equally striking success. But it is obvious that Mesopotamia can only be gradually developed. No one who knows anything about agriculture would assert that it could possibly be otherwise. The means of communication must be immensely improved, a dependable supply of labor must be insured, barrages and reservoirs must be built, enormous quantities of agricultural machinery, particularly tractors, must be procured, and for this, of course, the money must be found. A suggestion was recently made by a writer in "The Near East," not so fanciful as it may at first seem, that the pace of agricultural development will depend somewhat upon the progress made in designing tractors for agricultural uses. The writer pointed out that the area men can cultivate is limited by the pace of the oxen which they drive, but that if oxen can be replaced by tractors much more ground can be tilled, and irrigation schemes would consequently become remunerative far more quickly than is possible under existing conditions.

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[1] For a fuller account of this region, see "Life in the Moslem East," by Pierre Pontafidine.

One thing and another had conspired to delay us, so that it was the last week in June before we were ready to set out from Mosul for Aleppo. So, as June invariably finds the Bedouin tribes well up the valley of the Euphrates in their never-ending quest for pasture, it was inevitable that we would encounter some of them; the question was, which? Before starting, therefore, we had to acquaint ourselves, from various sources, with the existing state of desert politics. For even the desert has its politics, the importance of which is quickly discovered, and to his cost, by the traveler who disregards them. In order, therefore, to know just where we stood, it was essential that we should ascertain the relations of one sheikh to another, and their attitude toward the French and the British; between which tribes was war or peace; and if we would be permitted to pass from one to another without hindrance. Then, and then only, could we start with any degree of safety. The British authorities in Baghdad had told us that as long as we were within their sphere of influence we were reasonably safe, though they added that certain sheikhs whose territory we must pass through would levy a toll of ten pounds per person, a perquisite permitted them by the British Government in return for keeping the caravan routes open. Once across the Euphrates, however, we would have to look to the French for protection. What treatment we would receive from the tribes in this region we could only conjecture. All we knew was that when we had left Syria, three months before, there was heavy fighting between the Arabs and the French outposts along the Euphrates. Whether peace or war now prevailed along the great river we could not learn.

We had planned to leave Mosul at daybreak, but, owing to the irritating and usually quite needless delays which are inseparable from travel in the East, we did not get started until nearly sunset. To these delays we had become hardened, however, and, when one of us lost his temper, the others would gently remind him of the fate of the man who tried to hustle the East. It was the first time, so far as we could learn, that any one had attempted to reach Aleppo by motor by the route that we were taking, at least since the war; so our departure caused a distinct sensation, the cars being surrounded by an inquisitive throng of tea, coffee, and chocolate-colored humanity in skirts and turbans. The assistant manager of the

Mosul Farms, who had been our host during our stay in Mosul, did his best to cheer us up by relating some of the exceedingly unpleasant things which the Arabs had done to a French officer whom they had captured a few weeks before; and, by way of further encouragement, the thrifty Syrian who owned the cars asked us if we would mind paying him the full amount of hire in advance, as, he explained, there was no telling what might happen to us in the desert. Had an agent of an insurance company happened along just then he could have sold four casualty policies on the spot.

We had planned to spend the first night at an Arab village called Sinjar, about eighty miles west of Mosul, but, before we had covered half the distance, darkness was upon us. Motoring in the desert after nightfall is a hazardous proceeding, particularly if your lamps are lacking in power, like ours, for the terrain is broken at frequent intervals by little gullies, known as *nullahs,* which, though seldom very deep, can, unless negotiated with care, result in disaster. So, after crawling along for several hours, the feeble rays from our lamps penetrating only a few yards into the darkness, we were relieved to see, a mile or so to the westward, a cluster of pin-points of flame which we knew were camp-fires. It proved to be a small encampment of semi-sedentary Arabs—nomads who support themselves, during a portion of the year, by tilling the soil. Seldom have I received from strangers a more cordial welcome. The sheikh, whose flowing garments and patriarchal beard made him look like an Old Testament prophet, ordered carpets to be spread, camel-saddles were dragged out for us to lean against, and the women set about the preparation of the inevitable coffee. Ladew presented the sheikh with a box of his precious gold-tipped cigarettes and thereby set the seal on our friendship. For an hour or more we sat cross-legged on the carpets, and, through the unsatisfactory medium of our Arab drivers, carried on a conversation with the sheikh, while his followers, squatting about us in a respectful circle, listened with the polite curiosity of the desert dweller. Then the sleepiness with which we had been contending overcame us. The sheikh insisted that we must share his tent—his women-folk, he explained, would make themselves comfortable for the night in the open—but this we declined politely but firmly, for we had slept in Arab tents before. I had noted, at the edge of the camp, a great mound of *tibbin,* as barley chaff is called, for the tribesmen had been threshing their grain, and on this, despite the courteous protests of our host, I insisted on making my bed. Borrowing one of the large squares of felt which the Arabs place beneath their camel-saddles, I laid it on the *tibbin*, which was three feet deep, and on it spread my blankets. Hutchings and Sherin insisted on sleeping in the cars, but Ladew followed my example. Talk about your mattresses of air or feathers! This had them beaten to a frazzle. It was like sleeping on a cloud. Soon the camp fell silent; the moon came up in silver splendor; across the desert stole a gentle night-breeze—and I knew no more until I was awakened by the sun shining in my eyes.

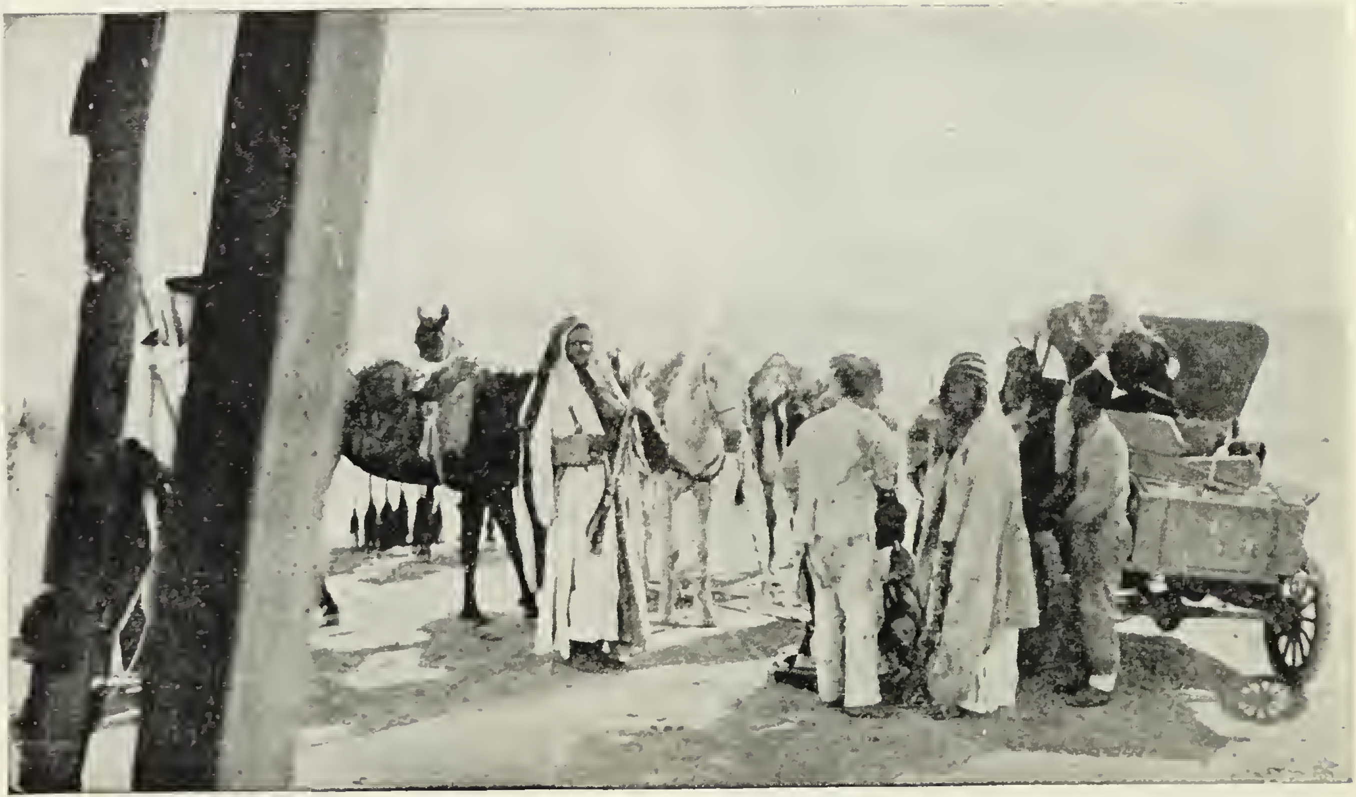
For the next hundred miles or so our way—for there was no road—led across a peculiarly desolate and forbidding country, a yellow, sun-baked plain, for the most part level as a billiard-table but occasionally intersected by *nullahs,* across which the agile little Ford scrambled without effort, but which presented serious difficulties to the larger car. For hour after hour we pushed on without seeing a human being, or, barring occasional herds of gazelle, a living thing. The whole world seemed to have been burned to a crisp by the remorseless sun, which hung above our heads, a ball of molten brass. The heat was almost unendurable, though so dry that we did not perspire. The dust stirred up by the wheels enveloped us in suffocating clouds. The solitude was appalling.

But, as we scrambled out of one of the many *nullahs,* we saw a towering column of dust rapidly approaching us across the plain. *"Beddos?"* I asked our driver, reaching for my gun. But he shook his head reassuringly. *"Inglizi,"* he answered. And presently, in confirmation of his assertion, there emerged from the advancing dust-cloud a long line of armored cars, the foremost bearing on its hood a little Union Jack. The lean barrels of one-pounders and machine-guns peered from their steel turrets, and sun-bronzed Tommies in shorts and quilted helmets were perched comfortably on their tops. On the turret of the leading car was painted the legend "H.M.A.C. Silver Witch," and the others bore such names as "Silver Queen" and "Silver Doctor." There must have been a score of them in all, including reconnoissance and supply cars and another fitted with a low mast and a radio outfit. Flying low above the column, like a great bird of prey, was a gray scouting-plane, also equipped with wireless apparatus, so that the cars were directed and manœuvered by an officer a thousand feet in the air. They had been making a demonstration for the benefit of certain recalcitrant tribes, it seemed, on whom the sight of the one-pounders, which can drop shells into an encampment with remarkable accuracy at a range of two miles, had a highly salutary effect. It was a dangerous country that we were now in, and I don't know when I have seen a more welcome sight. To me those armored cars looked as good as the destroyers which met our transport off Brest during the war.

It was the second day out from Mosul and we were making good progress, considering the roughness of the going, when, topping a little rise, we saw before us a forest of black tents which stretched across the desert far as the eye could see. It was more than an encampment; it was a nomad city, which, we learned afterward, extended for upward of seven miles. At sight of it our drivers swerved sharply to the westward, evidently in the hope of getting below the horizon before we could be seen. But it was too late, for, even as we looked, a band of horsemen, their *keffiehs* floating out behind them like colored clouds, came tearing down upon us as fast as their ponies could set foot to ground. Well in advance rode a stockily built, black-bearded Bedouin on a beautiful bright bay, who brandished his rifle above his head and shouted as he came. It was a thrilling sight, reminiscent of Buffalo Bill's Congress of Rough Riders, but with this difference: *these* riders were not pretending. At that particular moment I would have given everything I possessed for a sight of those armored cars.

Our departure from Mosul for the desert journey to Aleppo. Our departure caused a distinct sensation, the cars being surrounded by an inquisitive throng of tea, coffee, and chocolate-colored humanity in skirts and turbans.

Ferrying the cars across the Euphrates. The cars were ferried across on flat-boats guided by wire cables, for at this point the current is very swift.



The hold-up in the desert. We were surrounded by a milling crowd of angry Arabs, who menaced us with their rifles and demanded truculently why we had not halted when ordered.

Had the desert provided better going, and had our flight not been interrupted by an unexpected *nullah,* we could easily have outdistanced the tribesmen. But the delay involved in crossing the *nullah* gave the leading Bedouin time to intercept us. Flinging himself from his lathered horse when we were still a hundred yards away, he planted himself squarely in the path of the oncoming cars and covered us with his rifle. Our drivers, however, crazed with terror and excitement, kept straight on. But, as the cars bore down upon him the Bedouin never budged. I could see the black aperture of his rifle-muzzle and his finger twitching on the trigger, and every instant I expected to feel the impact of a bullet.

"Stop, you fool!" I shouted to our driver, but he was too panic-stricken to obey until he felt against the back of his neck the muzzle of my automatic. Then, with a squealing of brakes and a clatter of tin, the car came to a sudden halt. The next instant we were surrounded by a milling mob of angry Arabs, who menaced us with their rifles and demanded truculently why we had not halted when ordered to do so.

"Who are they?" I demanded of the driver. "What do they want?"

"They Shammars," he announced after a brief parley with the leader. "Their sheikh Arjil. Him very big fella. Want to see you pretty damn quick."

Now I knew that we were face to face with trouble spelled with a capital T, for we had been warned against Arjil. He was one of the great sheikhs of the Shammars, a powerful and warlike tribe, and, though we had been told that he received a large subsidy from the British Government on condition that he permitted travelers to pass through his territory unmolested, it was also reported that he had a blood-feud with the French, because of French planes' having bombed his encampment and killed some of his tribesmen some weeks before, and that, by way of retaliation, he had promised a most unpleasant fate for the next Frenchman who fell into his hands. It was up to us, then, to prove that we were not French. Under these circumstances I wished fervently that I had not agreed to carry official dispatches from the French consul in Baghdad to General Gouraud, the French high commissioner in Syria. The large linen envelope containing the despatches, sealed conspicuously with the arms of France, was reposing in the car, but there was no opportunity to conceal or destroy it. It bade fair to prove a most incriminating thing to have along.

By this time the Bedouins, seeing that we were few in number and not disposed to offer resistance, had quieted down, though their attitude was still menacing. Their leader condescended, however, to accept one of Ladew's impressive cigarettes, and, when I tactfully expressed admiration for his horse, he was visibly flattered and consented to pose for a picture. The picture having been taken, they closed in about us, and we proceeded slowly across the desert toward the camp. I felt very much as a captured Crusader must have felt when he was being conducted in triumph to the tent of Saladin. And the similitude was increased by the fact that, as we entered the outskirts of the tented city, other Arabs joined the procession, voicing their exultation by whoops and yells, so that we found ourselves the center of a maelstrom of brandished rifles and scowling faces.

We must have wound in and out among the tents for nearly a mile before we reached Arjil's headquarters—a tent of black goat's-hair, shaped like a marquee, perhaps forty feet in length, and with the wall rolled up on the side that was away from the sun. Within, sitting cross-legged on a prayer-rug, was Arjil himself, surrounded by a score of his chieftains, for we had evidently interrupted a tribal council. He was in the middle thirties, I should judge; slender, small-boned, with hands as small and graceful as a woman's, a pointed black beard, an aquiline nose, and peculiarly piercing eyes. His hair was braided and hung down before his shoulders in two long plaits; the *agal* that held his embroidered *keffieh* in place was of gold, and his snuff-brown *abieh* was worked about the neck in the same material; protruding from his scarlet sash was a disconcerting array of handles in gold, silver, and ivory, while, from a holster of red morocco, peeped the butt of a heavy Browning. He looked as though he had stepped straight from the pages of a desert novel or from the motion-picture screen. Contrary to Arab custom, he did not rise to receive us or offer us his hand, but, at a curt order from him, negro slaves unrolled a long narrow carpet for us to sit upon and brought forward a gaily decorated camel-saddle, against which they piled many cushions, so as to provide a rest for our backs.

As we knew no Arabic, and as Arjil was equally ignorant of English and French, conversation languished; so, there being nothing else for us to do, we sat in silence, cross-legged, our muscles quickly becoming cramped and painful from the unaccustomed position. Hutchings and Sherin sat on either side of me, but Ladew, who is the most enthusiastic amateur photographer I have ever known, had remained outside, where he was attempting to take a picture of a little Arab girl, who had as a pet a tame gazelle. From the scowls of disapproval with which the Arabs viewed this proceeding, I realized that it was not calculated to improve our situation.

"You 'd better forget your camera and sit down," I called to Ladew. "These fellows act as though they contemplated cutting our throats, and, if we are to get out of here alive, we 've got to jolly them along."

It quickly becoming evident that there was no way of interrogating us save by signs, Arjil spoke to one of his lieutenants, and a moment later our two drivers were led before him. I do not think that I have ever seen men more thoroughly frightened; they were as pale as their complexions would permit them to become.

"What is he saying?" I asked, after Arjil had subjected them to a cross-examination.

"He say you Fransawi," the man stammered. "He no like Fransawi. They kill his peoples."

"Tell him that we are not French, or British, either," I ordered. "Tell him that we are Americans."

"He not know Amerikani," the driver announced, after translating my remark. "He think mebbe you Fransawi—not sure."

I saw that the time had come to play our trump-card—in fact, our only card. Opening my despatch-case, I produced the To-Whom-It-May-Concern letter which I had taken the precaution of obtaining from Allen before leaving Damascus. It was a very impressive document, written in Arabic on the paper of the American consulate, and it bore the arms of the United States of America impressed on a large gilt seal. It not only made it amply clear that we were Americans, but that we were Americans who must be treated with respect. I handed it to Arjil with much the same gesture of assurance with which, in a game of bridge, I would have played the thirteenth trump. But, to my chagrin, he remained quite unimpressed. Then it developed that he could not read, for he handed the document to a *mullah*—every sheikh of importance has his attendant priest—for translation. Putting on a pair of large horn-rimmed spectacles, the *mullah* slowly read the letter aloud. At its conclusion Arjil gave a non-committal grunt.

"Well?" I said, addressing the driver, "what about it? What has he got to say now?"

There was a moment's colloquy.

"He say, sah'b," the interpreter replied, "he not know nothin' 'bout Amerika. He say he never hear of 'Nited States."

At this moment the other driver, who had quietly slipped out of the tent, reappeared with a peace-offering in the form of several cucumbers and a large melon, which he had brought from Mosul for his own consumption and which, because of their coolness, are greatly prized by the Bedouins. The smaller of the cucumbers Arjil despatched by a slave to the tent occupied by his women-folk; the larger ones and the melon he reserved for himself. Drawing from his girdle a vicious-looking dagger, he cut the melon into slices, with the intention, I assumed, of sharing it with us. But he intended nothing of the kind, for, using his dagger as a fork, he proceeded to devour the fruit himself.

Now, this, I realized, was wanton rudeness, and, if I permitted it to pass unnoticed and unrebuked, there was no saying what further indignity might suggest itself to him. In dealing with Eastern races the white man must demand and obtain respect; otherwise his prestige vanishes instantly and irretrievably. If Arjil once became convinced that he could insult us and get away with it, there was no reason why he should not think that he could murder us and get away with that, too. That is the way that the Arab mind works. He believes in an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, and, in such a case as this, I argued, he would be impressed by rudeness for rudeness.

"Bring me a melon or a cucumber," I told the driver.

"Feenish," he replied, laconically.

"Then go over to the car and get me a tin of fruit," I ordered.

The man returned shortly with one of the tins of pineapple which we had brought from Baghdad for consumption on the journey. I told him to open the tin, whereupon the eyes of Arjil lit up in anticipation, for your Arab loves certain kinds of European food, particularly tinned fruits. But, ignoring him as completely as he had ignored us, I proceeded to consume the contents, slice by slice. (I have never cared for pineapple since.) For some minutes he observed the performance in stony silence, and I began to think that it was likely to be my last meal on earth; then there crept over his forbidding features the shadow of a smile. Abruptly he clapped his hands and to the negro slaves who answered the summons gave a curt order. I have never seen prompter service in a Childs lunch-room, for, almost as quickly as it takes to tell about it, a circular mat of red, green, and orange leather was spread before us on the ground in lieu of a table-cloth. Around the edges of this were laid a dozen loaves of Arab bread, eighteen inches across, and the shape and thickness of a pancake, while in the center of the mat was set a huge silver platter from which rose an enormous pudding of mashed dates, swimming in a pool of bright yellow gravy. Flanking this imposing dish were capacious bowls of soured camel's milk, one for each of us.

"I don't think that I care for anything to eat," remarked Ladew, glancing at the feast with marked disfavor. "I 'm not at all hungry to-day."

"You 'd better pretend to be," I told him, "or you may never have a chance to be hungry again. I have a feeling that this fellow would n't take it kindly if we turned down his food. In fact, his resentment might take a very pointed form."

So we fell to in true Arab fashion, tearing off pieces of bread, rolling them into cornucopias, and filling them with pudding, as a soda-fountain clerk fills cones with ice-cream. As spoons are unknown in the desert, we scooped up the pudding in our hands, with the result that, long before the meal was over, the fronts of our jackets were dripping with yellow gravy. The bread, though bearing a resemblance to shoe-leather in its toughness, was good; the date-pudding was quite delicious; but the camel's milk I cannot recommend. But with Arjil watching us, we acquitted ourselves creditably, and what we could not eat our drivers did. "It was an eat for life," as Hutchings said afterward. Meanwhile a slave was preparing coffee over a charcoal fire, and when I saw this I knew that the day was saved, for a Bedouin does not drink coffee with those whom he regards as enemies or intends to murder. The coffee of the desert, as I think I have mentioned in an earlier chapter, is flavored with a seed which gives it a peculiar, though not unpleasant, aromatic taste, and is served without sugar in cups scarcely larger than thimbles, it being the invariable custom to serve three cups to each person. When the coffee-pot had thrice made the round of the circle, therefore, I felt that we could safely broach the subject of our departure.

"I will send a man with you to pass you through my tribe," Arjil announced through the medium of the driver when I told him that we must be going.

"How much shall I give him?" I asked, thinking that that would be the most graceful way of expressing our readiness to pay the customary tribute of ten pounds apiece.

"Two pounds will be ample," was the surprising answer. And when an Arab voluntarily relinquishes fifty-eight gold pounds you may be quite certain that he considers you a friend.

CHAPTER XII

FROM THE DESERT TO THE SOWN

THE lower edge of the sun was just touching the desert's rim—an enormous orange balanced on the edge of a great brown table—when we reached the Euphrates opposite the hamlet of Meyadin, where the cars were ferried across on flatboats guided by wire cables, for at this point the current is very swift. While the cars were being gotten down the precipitous bank to the ferry, I strolled up-stream a little way to a point where I could see the river winding northward, a monstrous gray serpent writhing across the waste. As I stood there in the lengthening shadows, the silence broken only by the distant cries of the Arab boatmen, the mighty river seemed to be peopled by the ghosts of the history-makers. Solomon, Sargon, Sennacherib, Nebuchadnezzar, Cyrus, Cambyses, Darius, Alexander, Diocletian, Zenobia, the beautiful Palmyran queen—all, in their time, had lived and ruled and loved and fought upon these very shores. Perhaps no other river has played so conspicuous a part in the world's history. It was the theoretical limit of the Jewish kingdom; for a long time it separated Assyria from the land of the Hittites; it divided the eastern from the western satrapies of Persia; and it was at several points the eastern boundary of the Roman Empire. Until the nomads came riding out of Inner Asia behind their horsetail standards to carry fire and sword along both the Syrian and Mesopotamian shores, its course was dotted by palaces, temples, and splendid cities, the ruins of which, representing all periods, still dot its banks, so that our journey became a historical panorama of ancient times.

Darkness had fallen when we drew into Deir-es-Zor, a prosperous little town on the right bank of the Euphrates, which is heavily garrisoned by the French and serves to hold in check to some extent the Bedouins of the Syrian and Mesopotamian steppes. Curiously enough, it was in Deir-es-Zor, after hundreds of miles of desert travel, that we had our first trouble with sand. In the very outskirts of the town, in order to avoid a particularly execrable bit of road, our driver attempted to make a little detour. The next moment the big Talbot was up to its hubs in fine white sand. After half an hour we abandoned our attempts to extricate it unaided and entered the town ingloriously on foot. The French military authorities, upon learning of our predicament, promptly sent a platoon of Senegalese *tirailleurs* to our assistance, but, so deep was the sand, it took two hours of hard work on the part of the sturdy Africans to get the machine upon hard ground again.

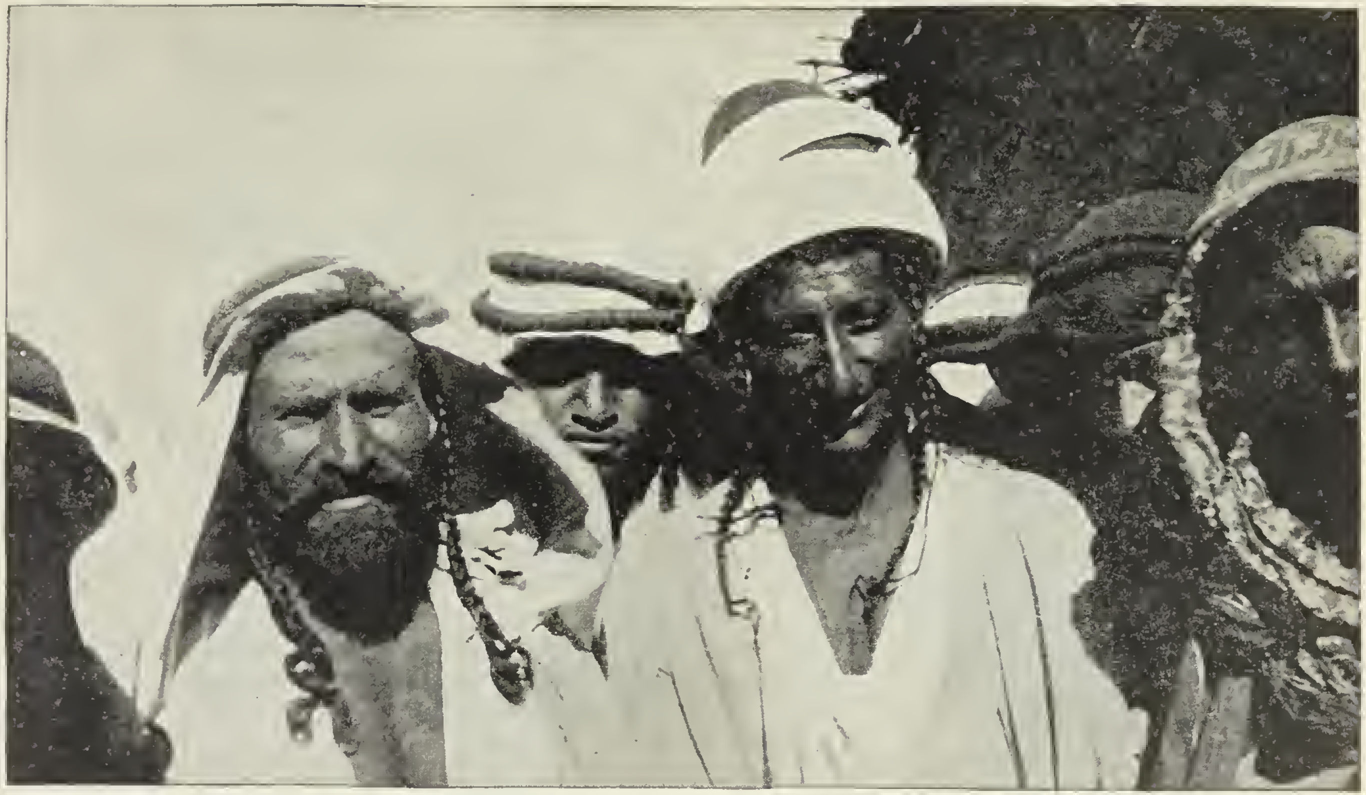
Deir-es-Zor is the most important outpost on France's Syrian frontier, and corresponds to the Laramie and Leavenworth of our own frontier days. It was garrisoned, when we were there, by Sudanese, Malagasy, and Annamite *tirailleurs,* Algerian and Moroccan *spahis,* a contingent of colonial infantry, and a battalion of the Foreign Legion, so that in its streets and coffee-houses one could hear half the languages of Africa and Asia. We dined with the French commandant and the officers of his staff on the terrace of the *quartier-général,* drinking toasts to our respective countries in tepid champagne—for there is no ice-plant in Deir-es-Zor—and, over the cigars and coffee, listening to strange tales of little wars in the world's forgotten corners, told by men who had themselves been actors in them. Afterward we ascended to the roof and ended a most adventurous and interesting day on mattresses spread beneath the stars.

It is something more than two hundred miles from Deir-es-Zor to Aleppo, and the road for the first half of the distance is the worst that I have ever seen. It had been cut to pieces during the rainy season by convoys of army camions, and it was so replete with washouts, land-slides, hummocks, holes, ruts, and thank-you-ma'ams that it seemed as though the car must be literally shaken to pieces. Only once, while crossing the Shipka Pass in Bulgaria, have I seen anything approaching it. Finally it became so bad that our irritation was overcome by our sense of humor, and we roared with laughter as we were hurled from side to side or tossed until our heads struck the top of the car. The comment of Sherin, jerked out rather comically between bumps, was to the effect that "They—told me—I would—have to—wind my—self up—in a—sash to—ride a—camel with—out bust—ing but—I need—that—sash—more here."

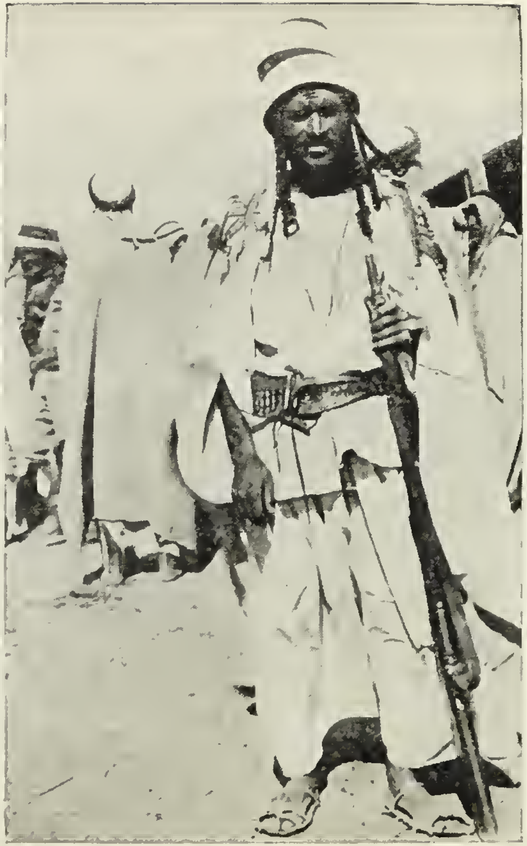
For some hundreds of miles above Deir-es-Zor the Euphrates traverses an open, treeless, and sparsely peopled region, in a valley a few miles wide, which it has eroded in the rocky surface. In this part of its course the precipitous sides of the valley, which sometimes closely approach the river, rise in places to a height of two hundred feet or more, while at one point, midway between Deir-es-Zor and Rakka, the river breaks through a basaltic dike about five hundred feet high, the scenery in this defile surpassing that near the Iron Gates of the Danube. Toward nightfall, when the level rays of the sun turn the eastern cliffs into walls of rosy coral, one is reminded of the lower reaches of the Colorado.

By far the greater part of this valley is uncultivated, much of it being covered with dense tamarisk jungle, the home of countless wild pigs, but there are considerable stretches of more or less alluvial soil which are cultivated in places with the aid of artificial irrigation. The method of this irrigation is most interesting, having come down, no doubt, from Assyrian days. Three or four piers of masonry are run into the bed of the river, frequently from both sides at once, raising the level of the stream and giving a head of sufficient power to turn the gigantic wheels, called *naouras,* sometimes forty feet in diameter, which lift the water to a trough at the top of the dam, whence it is distributed among the gardens and melon patches, rice, cotton, tobacco, licorice, and durra fields lying between the edge of the river and the rocky walls which hem it in. Climb these walls, however, and you find a steppe-like desert, covered in spring with verdure, the rest of the year barren and brown, which stretches away to the horizon. This is the camping-ground of the Bedouins, the right, or Syrian, bank being dotted with the black tents of the great Anazeh tribe, the opposite bank being occupied by the Shammars. To these warlike nomads the semi-sedentary Arabs who sparsely cultivate the river-bottoms, dwelling sometimes in huts, sometimes in caves, pay a tribute known as *kubba,* or brotherhood, as do also the riverain towns and villages, or did until the French came.

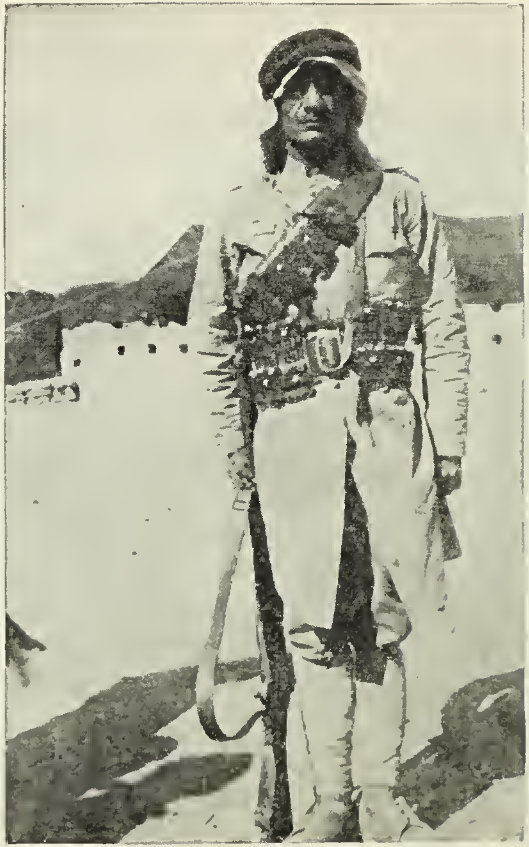
At Rakka, a little village of mud houses, encircled by entanglements of barbed wire and bristling with machine-guns, we stopped for *déjeuner* with half a dozen lonely officers of the Foreign Legion, a battalion of which formed the garrison. This celebrated force, "the Legion of the Damned," is recruited for the most part from men, other than French, who have left their countries suddenly and for their countries' good. No questions are ever asked of an applicant, but, once he has signed the papers of enlistment, he must submit to a discipline which, in its rigor and inflexibility, is almost without parallel in the armies of the world. The men who seek to lose their identity in the ranks of the legion as the result of crime or scandal or despair come from all parts of the globe and from all classes—men who once wore the mess-jackets of famous British regiments, men who bear on their faces the duelling scars of Heidelberg and Bonn, and other men who once wore the uniforms of convicts and carry on their backs scars left by the lash. Even in this little frontier post of Rakka



The Shammars, seeing that we were few in number and not disposed to offer resistance, had quieted down, and even consented to pose for a picture, though their attitude was still menacing.



This Shammar tribesman stands for the old order in the desert. He acknowledges no authority save that of his tribal sheikh.



This well-set-up trooper of the 'Iraq gendarmerie stands for the new order of things.

we saw men wearing the uniform of the legion who spoke Dutch, Spanish, Portuguese, Greek, Bulgarian, Italian, Rumanian, Russian, German as their native tongues, and one fair-haired young fellow greeted Sherin in the English of Devon. He had, he asserted, been a lieutenant in the Royal Air Force during the war and whispered that he was being detained by the French against his will. What he had done to get into trouble we did not inquire. Doubtless it is the desperation and despair of these exiles that has won for the Legion Etrangère its reputation for reckless bravery and unflinching courage, for the legionaries have the right to carry on their shoulders the scarlet *fourragère* of the Legion of Honor—the highest regimental honor in the gift of France.

Beyond Rakka the desert fairly swarmed with Bedouins. It was the northward trek of the Anazeh. For hour after hour we passed through camps so close together that they formed what was, to all intents and purposes, one vast nomad city. The low black tents of goat's-hair dotted the plain. in all directions. Everywhere the smoke from the dung-fed camp-fires rose lazily against the cloudless blue. In the shadow of the tents grave-faced men in flowing garments sat cross-legged on their carpets, polishing their weapons or muttering passages from the Koran. Women were busy over the cooking-pots while their naked children romped noisily in the sand. Youths astride of beautiful horses galloped madly across the plain. Far as the eye could see were droves of grazing animals. In one flock, we were told, were thirty thousand fat-tailed sheep. In one herd were fifty thousand camels. It was a nation moving. Such a sight has not been seen by many Europeans, and, after a few more years, it will never be seen again.

When Arjil released us and we crossed into the French zone we tacitly assumed that our adventures were at an end, but therein we were mistaken. For, the afternoon after leaving Deir-es-Zor, we had a second encounter with Bedouins, which, brief though it was, came unpleasantly near to ending our journey then and there. We had sighted another huge encampment, but this time we determined that, instead of arousing the suspicion of the Arabs by attempting to avoid it, we would keep straight on our way, for the commandant at Deir-es-Zor had assured us that we were not likely to experience any trouble with the Anazeh, in whose country we now were. So it was with considerable confidence that we approached the camp. The trouble really began in its outskirts, when children ran out from the tents to shout and make faces and throw stones, as children are quite inclined to do the world over. But the tumult made by the youngsters aroused their elders, who came pouring out of their tents like hornets whose nest has been disturbed. Youths and women joined in the unfriendly demonstration, and some of the men shook their fists menacingly in our direction.

"Better speed up a little," suggested Hutchings. "It looks to me as though this was not a healthy spot to loiter in."

But, almost before we realized our danger, the cars were surrounded by an excited throng of young bloods—youths of sixteen to twenty; the type that in every community is eager for trouble—whooping and yelling like Indians. Fortunately for us none of them had firearms, but most of them had snatched up clubs or spears and several of them were armed with a type of weapon dating back to Old-Testament days. I saw a slim young Arab whirling about his head a contrivance of cord and leather, but in the confusion I did n't recognize what it was until a stone the size of an egg tore through the back curtain of the car and struck me with terrific force on the shoulder. Three inches higher, and it would have taken me behind the ear, in which event I should now probably be occupying a desert grave. Now I realized that we were playing Goliaths to these desert Davids.

Mad with pain and angered by the treachery of the attack, I jerked my automatic from its holster and leveled it at the Arab, who was fixing a second stone in his sling. Another instant and he would have joined the houris in the Moslem paradise. But, just as my finger quivered on the trigger, Ladew shouted: "Don't shoot! The Ford has broken down!" Out of the corner of my eye I saw that the Ford, which was a hundred yards ahead, had been brought to a standstill by a blow-out and was already surrounded by a hostile crowd. We could n't well abandon the driver to his fate, to say nothing of our luggage; so I ordered our man to draw up alongside. Keeping the rabble at a respectful distance by a display of our weapons, we demanded to be taken to the sheikh of the tribe. This sheikh, we found to our surprise, was a youth of not more than seventeen, a nice-looking boy with friendly eyes and a rather winning smile. But when we told him of the unprovoked attack that had been made upon us, and pointed out the culprits in the crowd, the smile was replaced by a look which caused the offending hotheads to cringe and cower like dogs that expect a whipping. His eyes said to them as plainly as any words could have done: "How dare you get me into trouble with these *ferinjees?* Have you forgotten the last time that we were bombed by the French planes for molesting strangers? I'll attend to you as soon as they are gone.''

Offering us his hand, the boy ruler said something in Arabic, at the same time motioning toward his tent.

''He say he ver' sorry,'' our driver interpreted lamely. ''He say he give them fella hell. He say it not happen again never. He want you eat with heem.''

''No,'' I answered firmly, the taste of Arjil's feast still fresh in my mouth. ''Tell him that we can't eat with him because we must get on to Aleppo. And,'' I added, ''seeing that he is sorry, we won't make a complaint to General Gouraud.''

''But there is one thing I wish I had insisted on having,'' I said regretfully as the black tents dropped from view.

''What 's that?'' inquired Ladew.

''The David-and-Goliath sling that fellow tried to kill me with,'' I answered. ''It would have been a perfectly corking souvenir. So striking, you know.''

It was with a distinct feeling of regret that we drew near Aleppo, for, now that we were approaching the fringes of civilization, we felt that our adventures and experiences were at an end and that shortly we would emerge into the prosaic humdrum world again. It was as though we had reached the last page of an absorbing novel. But our fears that we had exhausted Asia's store of the strange and the curious proved premature, for, when barely a score of miles from the gates of Aleppo, Ladew gave a sudden ejaculation of astonishment.

"What on earth is that?" he exclaimed, pointing across the desert.

Following with my eyes the direction of his outstretched finger, I discerned what appeared to be a great cluster of enormous beehives, covering many acres, rising from the tawny waste. As we drew closer, however, they resolved themselves into houses, apparently built of mud, but the most extraordinary houses that I had ever seen. From ten to twenty feet in height, they looked for all the world like the noses of monster shells made for some titanic cannon. It was our first sight of the curious "beehive" villages which are the homes of the semi-sedentary Arabs who inhabit and cultivate

> The strip of herbage strown
> That just divides the desert from the sown,
> Where name of slave and Sultan is forgot,
> Peace to Mohammed on his golden throne.

These windowless houses, which are built of sun-dried bricks and covered with plaster, are a cross between the conical thatched hut of equatorial Africa and an Eskimo igloo. Though some of them are of considerable size, they contain only one room each, access to which is gained by crawling through a low doorway. Though not the most convenient way of entering a house, these low doorways have the merit of discouraging unwelcome visitors, for the householder, standing in the dim interior, can run the intruder through with neatness and despatch as the latter attempts to enter on all fours. What puzzled us was why any human being should *wish* to gain admittance. After enduring ten minutes in the interior of one of these beehive dwellings, where the odors of unwashed Arabs, sweat-soaked clothing, foul straw, garlic, roast mutton, and dung-fed cooking-fires combined to form a stench that rose to high heaven, my only wish was to regain the open air.

After loitering about the village for an hour, taking photographs of its houses and their sullen, suspicious inhabitants, we proceeded on our way. An hour later, topping a little rise, we saw in the distance the slender minarets and snowy buildings of Aleppo rising from an oasis of vivid green. Surrounding it were little squares of cultivated land that looked, from the distance, like green mantles spread out upon the arid plain. The metropolis of northern Syria is so old that its beginnings are lost in the mists of antiquity. In age it is surpassed in western Asia only by Damascus, which, after thirty-five centuries, still maintains its premier position. It was a great city when the Pharaohs ruled in Egypt; that we know. Abraham is said to have dwelt there and to have distributed milk to every thirsty stranger, whence the place's Arab name, Haleb. The Arabs, I might mention parenthetically, are a Semitic people, and, like the Hebrews, claim Abraham as the founder of their race. That Aleppo was a stronghold of the Hittites is proved by the inscriptions in that language within the gates of its citadel, and at present we know of no antiquity in Syria greater than that of this remarkable empire, which endured for the amazing period of three thousand years. It was probably converted to Christianity about the time that St. Paul sent his message to Antioch, but it did not begin to play an important rôle in Syrian politics until Moslem times. In A.D. 1056 it was taken by the great conqueror, Alp Arslan, and a century later saw its castle being held by the Crusaders against Saladin. It fell, like all western Asia, before the onslaught of the barbarian Mongols in 1260 and was sacked. During the Turko-Egyptian war of the middle of the last century it was bombarded by the Egyptians and, during the Great

War, was occupied by Allenby's army. When, by the terms of the treaty of San Remo, the mandate for Syria was assigned to France, Aleppo became the capital of the Syrian federation.

Like Diarbekr, Mosul, and Baghdad, Aleppo lost much of its importance with the opening of the Suez Canal, before which time it had been on the northern overland route to the East. But the extension of the railway from Beirut, which rejoices in the extraordinary name of Le Chemin de Fer de Damas Prolongement Homs et Hama, greatly increased its prosperity, and, with the opening for through traffic of the Baghdad Railway, it will undoubtedly regain its old-time commercial importance. At present it manufactures great quantities of cotton cloth which is exported eastward and forms the principal dress material for the peoples of northern Mesopotamia and Kurdistan.

Since history began, the meeting-point of the great trade-routes from Anatolia, Armenia, Kurdistan, Mesopotamia, Arabia, and Syria, and one of the chief gateways to all those regions, the thoroughfares of Aleppo provide a fascinating and endless panorama of all the types of Western Asia, the picturesqueness and variety of its street scenes being heightened by the contingents of Annamites, Malagasies, Senegalese, Algerians, and Moroccans who form the bulk of the French garrison. Though the city does not possess the romantic traditions of Baghdad, or the scriptural interest which attaches to Damascus, it is, nevertheless, a peculiarly attractive place with the slender minarets of its many mosques rising against the Syrian blue, its dim and bustling bazaars, and its flat-topped houses—white, pale blue, pink, or lemon yellow—set picturesquely on the terraced hill-slopes amid fragrant gardens. It has two buildings which are deserving of special mention. One is the Great Mosque, which contains the alleged remains of Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist—an enormous structure with a square campanile and a sort of loggia surrounding an immense marble-paved court. The other is the citadel, an imposing pile of ruined masonry dating from the times of the Saracens. Standing on the highest of the city's seven hills, it can be seen from miles around. With its deep moat, its massive gateways, its loopholed towers, and its crenelated ramparts, it is the medieval stronghold of one's imagination. As I stood in the blazing sunlight before the mighty pile, it required but scant effort of the imagination to hear the clang of its portcullis and the creaking of its drawbridge, to see the archers and the crossbowmen lining its battlements again, and, issuing from its tremendous portals, such a procession of knights and men-at-arms as rode forth from them in the days of Richard Cœur de Lion. What a pity, I thought, that Douglas Fairbanks could not have seen it when "Robin Hood" was being made ready for the screen.

When we arrived in Aleppo the first Syrian Parliament was in session, and the city was gay with the blue and white flags of the newly formed state and crowded with French officials and native politicians. It was like New York during the week of the Automobile Show, and to obtain a bed in any of the hotels was simply out of the question. Thanks to the good offices of Mr. Jackson, the American consul, however, the Syrian proprietor of the largest and most fashionable of the many *cafés chantants* which have sprung up in the wake of the French armies of occupation generously placed at my disposal a most sumptuous apartment which he maintained for an intimate friend. Where the lady went during my brief tenancy I did not inquire. After having endured for many weeks the discomforts of the desert, I would have slept well despite the lace hangings of the bed, the perfumed satin coverlet, the rococo furniture, and the array of scent-bottles and cosmetic-jars which covered the dressing-table, had it not been for the racket rising from the garden beneath my windows, where the tortured strains of a jazz orchestra, the cries of harassed waiters, the clatter of silverware and dishes, the popping of champagne corks, and the voices of French, Russian, and Levantine *chanteuses* raised in song continued without intermission from ten o'clock in the evening until long after dawn.

"If this is civilization," I said to myself bitterly, after two sleepless nights, "take me back to the desert again."

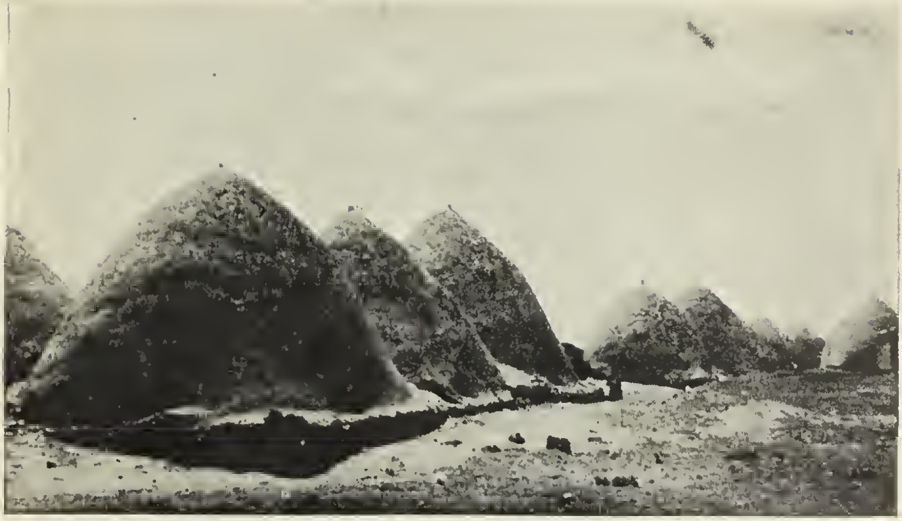
It is something more than two hundred miles from Aleppo to Beirut, and in all the world there are few journeys so rich in historic interest. We tore southward past rivers, mountains, and towns bearing names with which we had been familiar ever since we were children in Sunday-school. The lands of the Hittites, the Laodiceans, the Phœnicians, and the Philistines; the cedars of Lebanon, whence Solomon obtained the timbers for the Temple; the hills and valleys trodden by St. Paul in his evangelistic wanderings—it was as though there were being turned before us the leaves of a great picture-Bible. How I should have enjoyed having with me on that journey certain European acquaintances and expatriated Americans who patronizingly refer to the United States as "a new, crude country" and to Americans as "a young people." For the lands through which we passed were rich and powerful when Europe was still peopled by skin-clad barbarians dwelling in wattle huts. How a member of the oldest European aristocracy could be patronized by a native of Hama, for example, that sleepy, picturesque town on the Orontes which is mentioned in the inscriptions of Thotmes as being a great city fifteen hundred years before the birth of Christ!

Twoscore miles south of Hama lies the rather dilapidated Syrian town of Homs, whose splendid Temple of the Sun was once famous throughout the world, one of its priests, Heliogabalus, exchanging his sacerdotal vestments for the purple robes of an emperor of Rome. Under its walls, when Christianity was not yet three centuries old, Aurelian defeated the armies of Zenobia and carried to Rome as his captive the beautiful Palmyran queen. Three hundred and fifty years later Homs fell before the onslaught of the Saracens, but in the closing year of the eleventh century the Crusaders rode in triumph through its open gates and replaced the crescent with the cross.

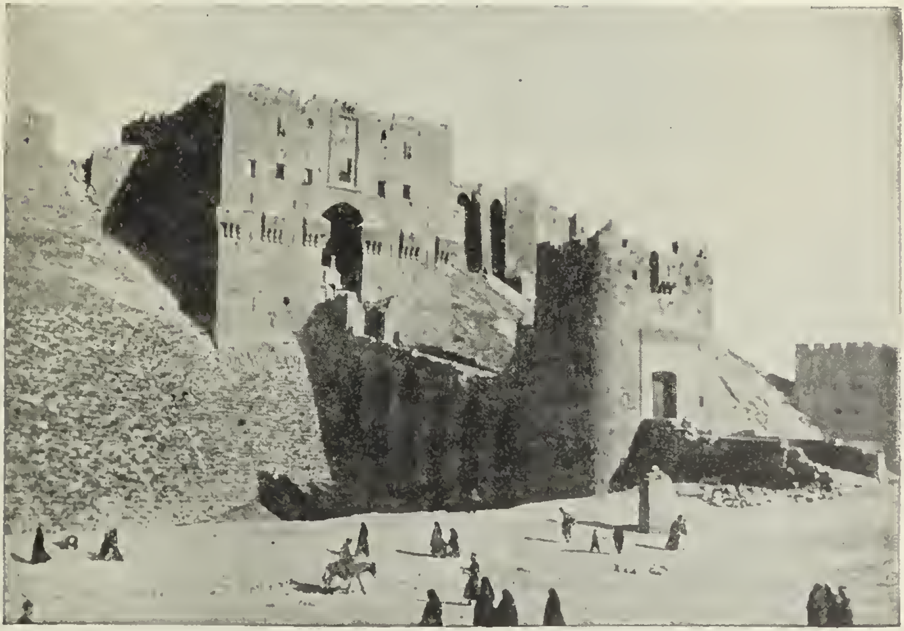
Fifty miles farther on we paused in our southward flight for a day at Ba'albek, which was once the most magnificent of Syrian cities and the Heliopolis of the Greco-Roman world. It stands in a sort of oasis, amid gardens and trees, on the bare brown flanks of the Anti-Lebanon, thirty-eight hundred feet above the level of the sea. Though it has been almost wholly destroyed by wars and earthquakes, its ruins are perhaps the most beautiful in existence. Among its maze of monuments and shrines are three of surpassing beauty and importance: the Temple of Venus, the Temple of Jupiter, and the Great Temple of the Sun-God, Ba'al. All of them date from the century following the Crucifixion, though the platform of the so-called Acropolis, on which the two last-named temples stand, is considerably older. The Temple of the Sun must have borne a striking resemblance to the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, for it was originally surrounded by fifty-four columns, twenty-two feet in circumference and seventy-two feet in height, the half-dozen which are still standing serving to give an idea of the temple's majestic beauty and cyclopean dimensions. Close by stand the remains of the Temple of Jupiter, which, though smaller than the Temple of the Sun, was nevertheless larger than the Parthenon at Athens. It has been described as "at once the most perfect and the most magnificent monument of ancient art in Syria," and, for the lovers of the beautiful, it is well worth going half across the world to see.

The quarries from which the material for the temples at Ba'albek was obtained are in the outskirts of the native village hard by. Interesting though they are, it is not a place in which to linger, particularly on a hot day, for the Arabs use the numerous small caverns in the rock as burial-places for their dead, stuffing the remains into the cavity and closing the entrance with loose rocks. Here one may see a colossal block of hewn stone, probably intended to be used in the construction of the outer wall of the Acropolis. How such a mass of stone could be transported, however, remains an insoluble problem, for it is fourteen feet wide, thirteen feet thick, and seventy feet long, and has been estimated to weigh at least a thousand tons. Here it has lain, just as it was cut, since that bloody day, thirteen centuries ago, when the Arabs stormed the city, destroyed its splendid monuments, and butchered its priests on their own altars. But the Arabs must have been slipshod in their work of destruction, for in 1260 Ba'albek was destroyed by Hulagu and his Asiatic hordes, and, in the first year of the fifteenth century, was pillaged by the Tartars under Timur the Lame, the destruction being made complete by an earthquake in 1759, which left comparatively few of the walls and columns standing. The crowning desecration occurred, however, in 1899, when the kaiser, during his spectacular progress through the Bible lands, affixed to the walls of the Great Temple an ornate marble tablet, lettered in German script and looking like an enormous Christmas-card, to inform future generations that Ba'albek had been honored by a visit from the All-Highest! I had seen this tablet shortly after it was put up, and, noting its absence, I inquired of the custodian what had become of it. He led me to a ramshackle hut without the wall, and there, amid other discarded pieces of junk, the imperial tablet lay, just as it had been torn down by the Allied soldiers, chipped and broken. It struck me that that tool-shed was a sort of Syrian Doorn.

Beyond Ba'albek the road takes a southwesterly direction, twisting and turning down the slopes of the Anti-Lebanon and then striking off at great tangents across the broad and fertile valley which separates the Anti-Lebanon from the Lebanon range. The latter rises from the coast by steep slopes, buttresses, and shoulders with many terraces, natural and artificial, that are cultivated to heights of five, six, and even seven thousand feet, and it is dotted with villages and monasteries. Wheat grows up to six thousand feet and vines to nearly five thousand, with olives still higher. There are many other fruit-trees, but the principal



One of the "beehive" villages on the upper Euphrates. The windowless houses, which are built of sun-dried bricks, look like the noses of monster shells made for some titanic cannon.



The citadel of Aleppo. With its deep moat, its massive gateways, its crenelated ramparts, and its loopholed towers, it is the medieval stronghold of one's imagination.

passes, the sun-scorched orange desert, the Bedouins, the low black tents, the files of swaying camels, the old, old cities—these were but memories now, topics of conversation before an open fire or around a dinner-table.

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By camel and car to the peacock throne.

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